BRIDE STEALING: A MYTH OF MISOGYNY

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# BRIDE-STEALING: A MYTH OF MISOGYNY

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**ABSTRACT**

Bride-stealing, an explicit symbolic misogynistic action in *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam,* is analyzed as a long-term patterned conduct of human behavior among the peoples who produced these works. The systematic pattern of bride stealing found in the epics discussed suggests that within these groups social constructs had always been in favor of female inferiority and subjugation. This places an emphasis on gender as an issue, manifested in the treatment of women by men as "others." The narrations of marginalization of women in the epics lead to a critique of the hypothesis that they are misogynistic. Here a framework of theoretical formulation is put forward to explore the origin of the practice of bride-stealing as well as the behavioral and psychological factors behind the intentions of both abductor and the abductee. The ancient epics are examined in a comparative literary style, and analyzed from an interdisciplinary stance with the guidance of cultural patterns, historically-created social orders and power-motivated political systems. After examining five thousand years of the history of ancient Greece and India, substantiated by archeological, anthropological, and linguistic evidence, this dissertation argues that the phenomenon of "bride-stealing" occurred basically in male-dominant societies and stems from various components of the socio-economic setting of these societies. Studies show that the abducted women in the epics lived in times of social transition. The abuse of women that echoes in the epics is sometimes misconceived as reflecting misogyny. Women were targets in times of upheaval, and suffered due to incursions of pastoral nomads

imposing their social order of patriarchy. This paper deduces that women were the victims of war, and that, following successful conquests by these pastoral nomadic societies and subsequent shifts in political power, their status underwent tremendous change. Furthermore, the abductions and overpowering behaviors of men towards women in myths and epics served as encoded messages to women from men to sustain their superiority over the "others," reflecting the ongoing imposition of values from the dominant culture.

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## Introduction

Bride-stealing, a common ingredient present in the genre of ancient epics, notably *The Iliad,* and *The Kamba Ramayanam*, has sometimes been misconstrued as misogynistic and interpreted as a marginalization of women by men. The rendition of reality in literature, mirroring the actions, feelings and ideas of people, has been typically an artistic move of the author to offer an overview of the human story. Despite the prevalence of seemingly misogynistic features, the investigation of social systems in ancient Greek and ancient Indian cultures indicates otherwise. The phenomenon of bride-stealing is evaluated here based on the assumption that the constitutive factors of the text are products of culture.

This dissertation explores the idea that the misogynistic elements reflected in the epics are, in fact, atrocities of war rather than misogyny. In addition, it examines the following:

- The origins of the terms "bride" and "stealing";
- the physical, psychological, and social implications of bride-stealing;
- the historical background and the underlying causes of the bride-stealing events of the epics under study; and
- the impacts on women due to the introduction of patriarchy by pastoral nomadic invaders as reflected in the epics.

There is a commonly held belief on the part of many feminist scholars that women have *always* been marginalized and have suffered a subjacent position in *all* societies.

In contrast, this dissertation argues that the matrilineal Neolithic cultures that predated the incursions of nomadic patriarchal societies into the region from southeastern Europe to south Asia were relatively egalitarian, including relatively high status for women. However, as a result of these historical incursions, the status of women in cultures of Greece and India, for example, became reduced. The review of thematic parallels seen in both history and literature (such as in epics and sagas) and the atrocities of pastoral nomads may shed light on the behavioral and psychological factors underlying the intent of bride-stealing. Women were respected in the diverse traditions of many Neolithic cultures. They not only enjoyed power in the private (i.e., household) arena with ties of kinship, but were also participants in political power with skillful manipulation of the system. After the invasions, women's status passed through a turbulent traditional phase. The epics studied convey surprising parallels of specific concepts of power and domination in both Greece and India due to common political, sociological and cultural processes. Women, and their subsequent loss of status, as seen through the lens of these ancient cultures, were victims of war at the hands of their enemies. The multifaceted nature of societal changes emerged from the chaotic disposition of wars and from the effects of the pastoral nomads imposing their patriarchal social order over the existing social order in which women had previously enjoyed relative freedom and harmony.

**Scope and Limitations**

By necessity, this dissertation is a qualitative paper, not a quantitative scientific document. The scholary research involved combing through ancient texts in their orginal languages, as well as reviewing modern texts on the areas highlighted throughout the dissertation. The scrutiny of ancient epics and myths raised many limitations in this dissertation. The argument developed from different timelines and the citations from authors of the distant past may undermine the still valid issue of bride-stealing. The practice of bridestealing warrants further exploration due to the re-emergence of the practice in contemporary societies. The continued relevance of the issue is still a valid area for further investigation which can shed more light on both the ancient and modern practices of "bride-stealing."

Terminologies used in this dissertation such as "nomads," "tribes," "egalitarian"and "matriarchy" may carry distinct meanings in different disciplines. The terms "tribe" and "tribal tendency" mentioned in the dissertation refer exclusively to the tribes mentioned in the epics, and the cited materials may reflect the opinion of the individual authors. Other terms are derived from the works of specific authors. For example, the term "gylany," used to refer to the sexes being 'linked' rather than hierarchically ranked, was originally coined by Riane Eisler and popularized by Gimbutas (1991, p. 324).

## Chapter 1: Literature as Cultural Expression and Epics Reflect Ancient Cultures

### Human Beings as Products of Culture

Human beings are the products of culture. As such, the concept of culture becomes the conceptual center-point for generalizations about human behavior. Geertz writes that, "Believing, with Max Weber, that man [*sic*] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself [*sic*] has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (1973, p. 5). Clyde Kluckhohn (1965) offered a variety of definitions, including: "the total life way of a people" (p. 24), "the social legacy the individual acquires from his [*sic*] group" (p. 24), "a way of thinking, feeling and behaving" (p. 28). Kluckhohn (1965) continues that "A culture is learned by individuals as a result of belonging to some particular group, and it constitutes that part of learned behavior which is shared with others" (p. 31). Ulin (2001) opines that in order to understand a culture, one should look more closely at its social system which consists of the totality of institutions that compose a particular society (p. 36). However, since culture is not static, the total way of life of a people and their way of thinking, feeling and behaving can change dramatically due to a variety of factors such as contacts with other cultures. Hence, the understanding of a culture is closely associated with the history of the transformations of economical, political and religious elements in given periods, and therefore, it should be analyzed within the framework of historical transformation of culture as a whole.

**Literature Setting the Stage for Cultural Expression**

Daiches (1956) writes, “Literature… refers to any kind of composition in prose or verse which has for its purpose not the communication of fact but the telling of a story (either wholly invented or given new life through invention) or the giving of pleasure through some use of inventive imagination in the employment of words” (pp. 3-4). Literature is a field of intellectual operation in which the author becomes a creator, and his/her intent is, sometimes, to control others with his/her creative spirit. An author’s invented story has an expressive aim in which he/she consciously or unconsciously may embody personal cultural concepts in the composition. The author’s internal concept of human nature has a direct impact on his/her thinking, feeling and behavior and is expressed in his/her writing. Therefore, the literature produced can become a catalyst in which human beings’ deepest emotions can be experienced via the author’s words.

A work of literature reflects the creative and expressive power of the writer and can mirror the author’s reflection of human life. An author’s themes come from the complexity of life which emerges from contact between human beings. The congenial feelings that readers share with a piece of literature or the aesthetic pleasures that they derive from the plot can mirror their or others’ lives. As a result, the content fascinates readers because of the relatedness to similar events in their lives and the emotions it provokes. Thus, literature sets the stage for provocative and stimulating expressions, including philosophical and psychological inquiry for both author and reader.

**Concept of Mimesis in Literature**

Based on earlier work by Weber, Bowie (2000) states that human beings may be described as "meaning makers" (p. 38). This is what Aristotle calls *techne* in Greek, explaining it as "a productive capacity informed by an understanding of its intrinsic rationale", and *techne* is conventionally translated as art. The intrinsic rationale stems from man's/woman's urge to understand his/her own self and his/her innate capacities through his/her actual behavior. In congruence with Weber's statements, Aristotle believes that, in order to make meaning of his/her behavior, man/woman evaluates and rationalizes his/her own actions and feelings through imitating them in his/her expression in literature. Heath (1996) cites Aristotle's argument that "poetry is an expression of a human instinct for *mimesis*," and "human beings are by nature prone to engage in the creation of likenesses" (p. xiii). Μίμησις (mimesis), is a Greek word that derived from μῖμος, (mimos) meaning to mimic or to imitate. Therefore, every moment of human's life becomes fodder for an artist to illustrate recognizable human nature in his imaginary world, made up of words. In the same vein, according to Auerbach (2003), with his New Historicism approach, the way *mimesis* works in the mode of literary criticism is to engrave history into literature, and it creates a "profound historicity" (p. 22). According to Auerbach, when an event of the past becomes recorded in literature, it becomes history. Thus, history can be extrapolated from literary materials, and there is an element of truth in Barber and Berdan's (1998) statement that

“description, as we conceive of it, is rooted in reality” (p. 35), and that reality comes from the past experience of humankind (p. 49).

The artistic motives of literature make humans both objects of study and meaning makers. The Post-structuralists probed the ”self” that the literary work brings about. According to Berman (1988), ”the internal structure of language becomes prominent as the properties and functions of ’finite’ humankind (the invented ’man’ [*sic*]) become the formal architecture of knowledge” (p. 179). It is integral that a work of art should have humans as a focus, as literature is by humans for humans. The structure of literature alone will not satisfy the aesthetic and moral needs of one who looks for his/her fulfillment in literature. Furthermore, literature is a record of changing human expression over time. Therefore, a total understanding of the text is crucial to grasp what has been said in a work of literature.

For Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, the constitution of meaning in a work of art is primary and immanent. According to Ulin (2001), Gadamer recommends ”close study of the text,” and ”the interaction between the text and the reader.” As Winch (1958) notes that ”the criteria of logic are not a direct gift of God, but arise out of, and are, only intellegible in the context of, ways of living or modes of social life” (p. 100). Context-dependent criteria of truth are vital in the understanding of a situation or an event. Hence, systematic review and analysis is required to elicit human social organization from historical background, enabling us to comprehend the details of an event such as bride-stealing. Therefore, such events as the abductions of women

that the epics portray need to be closely examined and interpreted hermeneutically to envision the social reality of the time in which they occurred.

Many scholars agree that poetry is the first genre invented from the profusion of sagas, romances, and folklores of preliterate societies all over the world. The birth of poetry was an act of conscious intellection to identify the self. Stocking (2007) avers that,

> "With the famous and fateful declaration from the "Second Meditation," Renee Descartes gave decisive expression to what has served for centuries as the fundamental presupposition concerning the nature of the self in all modern, Western cultures - namely, the identification of self with acts of conscious intellection" (p. 54)

Stocking (2007), while setting out to delineate the nature of self as a fundamental component of the inner world of Homeric epics, broods over *Ego, su, autos* (I, you and self/same). He expounds on "self" by portraying a unified picture of what is to be a self. At the outset of his argument, he quotes Descartes, Meditations HR II 153. "What then am I? A thing which thinks…. A thing which doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels." He mentions the Cartesian "thinking thing," *no res cognito*. His conscious effort to trace the self through "un-self" is evident from his mention of "spirit," *thumos* and "soul" (pp. 54-84). Applying the ontological theories of the philosopher Descartes, he scrutinizes the "ghost of stricken Patroclaus" who "was like the man to the life, every feature, the same tall build and the

fine eyes and voice and the very robes that used to clothe his body." But, he or it "hovers," as is mentioned as a phantom (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XXIII, Lines 76-80). The invisible soul in life is apparent in death by its absence. Hence, in death, we become cognizant of life which, in turn, declares that humans have body, mind, and soul. The confluence of these three has always intrigued humans from time immemorial. Aristophanes mentions Socrates' "The Thinkary," in his comedy. Though a parody, it reaffirms that "The Thinking Shop" exclusively belongs to human beings.

In the same vein, the thinking competence of human beings fascinates the tragedian Sophocles. In *Antigone*, he writes "Wonders are many but there is nothing as wondrous as man" [*sic*] (Line 237). Aside from the fact that man's body [*sic*] is an engineering feat; a man [*sic*] is wondrous because he [*sic*] is "excellent in wit." In addition to his/her wits, he/she teems with emotions, a representation of the existence of mind and soul. This correct combination of wits and emotions puts humans on top of the phylogenetic scale. Aristotle, the great classifier, defines literary works as the "conscious art or mere habit….imitate and represent various objects through the medium of colour and form," and "the imitation is produced by rhythm, language, or 'harmony' either singly or combined" (Aristotle, trans. 1907, Lines 11-14). Therefore, the urge to express his/her emotions through his/her wits engenders creativity, a propellant of the inception of the arts and eventually the epics.

**Epic as a Genre of Literature**

The form that the author's employment of his/her words takes becomes the genre of western literature including epics, lyrics, prose, and drama. Similarly, the traditional modes of literature are *Iyal* (prose), *isai* (poetry), *nadagam* (drama) in the Tamil literary world. Epic, as a genre of literature, is one of the earliest modes of oral poetry which represents the ancient world, and displays the lives led by ancient people. Epics burgeoned as cultural expression, and were disseminated throughout the world in ancient times. An epic is, by common consent, a long narrative, but nevertheless a poem.

Setting out to enumerate the fundamentals of epics, Hainsworth (1989) writes, "We are looking at the longest lived and most diffused of all literary forms" (p. 3). He adds that epics have been written in different cultures at different time periods "with every appearance of spontaneity whenever societies throughout the world achieved a certain stage of development or a certain kind of culture. The word "diffusion" is an area of interest through which the literary form could have travelled from one place to another. Kottak (2006) claims, "Exchange of information and products has gone on throughout human history because cultures have never been truly isolated. Diffusion is direct when two cultures trade, intermarry or wage war" (p. 76). Through diffusion, the epics sprang up in different societies in different forms expressing various ideas, irrespective of diverse times and places. Yet, epic poems changed, as all genres do, in different historical situations at different times and in diverse traditions.

As Brann (2002) puts it, “Whitehead said that all philosophy was a footnote to Plato, so we might say that all Western literature is a footnote to Homer insofar as literature is concerned, he is indeed a tradition” (p. 8). However, gleaning from the Scandinavian and Gothic records, and culling out internal and external evidence archeologically, historically, and linguistically, Chadwick (1974) claims that “it seems probable that the development of heroic poetry began in the Heroic Age itself, not only among the Goths but throughout the greater part of the Teutonic world”(p. 63). Chadwick’s (1974) conclusion suggests that the heroic epic as a genre in the Western tradition must have existed even before Homer’s time. Hence, Homer probably had epic conventions to adhere to when he composed *The Iliad* as a heroic poem. However, Aristotle then defined epic characteristics by pulling essential elements from Homer, and an epic convention for Western Literature was begun.

Pomeroy, Burstein, Donlan and Roberts (1999) have gleaned the cultural elements of the Homeric world from Homer’s epics. Similarly, incorporating cultural elements into epics is considered vital by the Tamil people in order to record their culture. Subramanyan (2002) opines that the Tamil literary world demands that the cultural expressions in the Tamil epics *Aram, porul, inbam* and *veedu* are the distinct cultural elements expected from an epic. He adds that Aram (domestic ethics) contains explications about both arranged and love marriages. Porul deals with the ethical code of conduct in amassing wealth. Inbam is about the happiness of this world, and veedu shows the pathway to enlightenment (p. 338). Silappathigaram is a Tamil epic which is

replete with cultural expressions in that it has detailed descriptions of the lives and livelihoods of people and their religious codes.

Tamil scholars have frequently been disappointed with the paucity of epics in Tamil literature in spite of the generally high level of development of that literature. The influence of Sanskrit epics impelled the origin of epics in the Tamil language. Consequently, in Tamil tradition, the first epic, Silappathigaram, was written by Ilango Adigal around 2 A.D. Its sequel, *Mani Megalai,* was written by Ilango Adigal's contemporary, Seethalai Saathanar. Both Silappathigaram and Mani Megalai have women as protagonists reflecting the status that women held in Tamil society. While these two are jointly called "Twin epics" (*rettai kappiyangal)*, along with *Chinthamani*, *Valayapathi* and *Kundalakesi* collectively, they are called *Aimperum kaapiyangal* (Five great epics) (Kasirajan, 1976, pp. 78-106). *The Kamba Ramayanam*, a secondary epic, closely following the story line of Valmiki's Sanskrit epic, *Ramayana,* came much later in the 12th century A.D. Kambar wrote *The Kamba Ramayanam* at the insistence of a Chola King called Kulothungan, with emphasis on war following the conventions of Sanskrit epics (Kasirajan, 1976, p. 38). Subsequently, Tamil writers incorporated into the epics the thematic narrative classifications of Tamil literature which hitherto had had an abundance of lyrics: one is *Agam* (domestic) and the other is *Puram* (public). As Ramakiruttinan (2007) puts it, "Tamil literature deals with the domestic and non-domestic lives of the Tamil which are called *Agapporul* and *Purapporul* respectively" (p. 72).

This view of humans' whole life, as divided into two aspects of *Agam* and *Puram* in Tamil Literature is indeed unique, and that is not to be found anywhere else in the literatures of the world. Agam is associated with ceremonial expressions of domestic social standing, demonstrating the fundamental dynamic elements of harmony and bliss. Puram, as its name suggests, evidently imparts the essentials of ethics, hospitality, and philanthropy outside of the domestic arena. One of the requisites of Tamil epics is to fuse elements of Agam and Porul, according to Nilamani (1986). She continues that though Tamil epics such as *Mani Megalai*, *Seevaga Chinthamani*, and *Periya Puranam* concentrate on religious didacticism, they strictly adhered to the epic conventions by not describing the body parts of women, but only exemplifying their jewelry.

**Myth as Narrative Structure in Epics**

Mythological stories of Zeus, the Father of Olympians, abducting women during his erotic adventures are embedded in Greek epics. Ancient customs are inscribed in the stories of myth, and hence they are collective and communal. They are often accorded to another time during which the behaviors are presumed to be "normal." According to Watts (1954), mythology is "to be defined as complex stories -- some no doubt fact, and some fantasy – which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life" (p. 7). The Johnson and Johnson (2003) elucidate, "Mythology was a complex structure of traditional narratives in which a hierarchy of gods and goddesses and other supernatural beings played the central roles. Often, mythology is commonly referred to as a widely

accepted idea that is simply untrue" (p. 15). The question arises, then, as to why we even bother with something that is not true. However, mythologies are not about truth, but about behavior and belief; in other words, they are about culturally-specific ideas concerning truth. According to Mehoke (1975), Vickery believes that it "closes the gap between theory and performance" (p. 20). Vickery (1958) writes that "poets are interested in myths for the same reason other people are: curiosity over ancient tales, fascination about incongruities of subject and idea, and puzzlement over human and divine motives" (pp. 371-78). However, in contrast, the Johnson and Johnson (2003) argue that "A myth is a set of commonly held beliefs that expresses a higher, sometimes, spiritual or psychological truth that cannot, in the culture in which it exists, be explained in literal, scientific terms" (p. 15). This brings to mind Jung's theory of manifesting the unconscious and unexplainable, as a characteristic of instinct, into an emblematic expression ("Collective Unconscious," Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010).

The mysteries of nature, birth, death and anything beyond human control mystify the human mind leading to a search for an unattainable answer to social realities. The Johnson and Johnson (2003) argue that "cultures turn to myth, for example, to explain the creation of the world, the existence of evil, and natural phenomena for which they have no scientific explanation" (p. 15). The prevalence of cultural universals or "*consensus gentium,*" as Geertz (1973) puts it, provides implications of manifestation of the collective unconsciousness of Jung's theory of archetype, which is, in turn, an expansion of the idea of Freud "whose brilliant flashes of

insight have helped to light our way in exploring the dark recesses of the human mind" (Guerin, Labor, Lee, Reesman & Willingham, 1992, p. 169).

It is important to deduce the true meaning of myth in order to explicate the nature of society in a given time period. The relation between myth and its meaning, Levi-Strauss (1962) considered, is inherent in the human mind itself. Vernant (1983) attests, "So, in studying the body of myth we are looking less at its narrative contents than at the universal mental operations which structure it" (p. 17). It is this theory of the structuralism of Levi-Strauss that threw light on the projections of the human mind. Levi-Strauss (1962) calls it an intellectual bricolage, a collective knowledge constructed with multiple shades of meanings (p. 16). According to Levi-Strauss, "Mythical events, or rather the remains of events while science, 'in operation' simply by virtue of coming into being, creates its means and results in the form of events, thanks to the structures which it is constantly elaborating and which are its hypotheses and theories" (1962, pp. 21-22). This is the structuralism he points out. Scholes (1974) writes, "For, in its broadest sense, structuralism is a way of looking for reality not in individual things but in the relationships among them" (p. 4). What psychoanalysis does to an individual mind, myths do to the consciousness of the society. The structure of the society is a reflection of the structure of the collective unconsciousness of the society. Thus, the mythological versions of abduction of women are the likely wieldy representation of the psychology of a male-oriented society that reflects the mental operations of men in an effort to sustain their stand of superiority. It is a commonly held collective unconsciousness of a

world devoid of the viewpoint of women. In addition, the interwoven religious element as actions of Zeus is the steadfast ruse integrated with a fear factor to smother resistance from the subdued. However, the dominance and the overpowering obsession of men of a particular age mirror the inner-workings of the society of that age. In this light, it is intriguing that Zeus is mainly instrumental behind mythical bride-stealing, although other Olympian deities such as Hades and Apollo also venture into it, following the Father of Gods.

**Bride-Stealing as Mythological Expression**

Bride-stealing runs rife in ancient epics, and it is crystallized in myths. Homer alludes to this mythological bride-stealing in his epic. Homer's *The Iliad* makes fleeting mention of Apollo's abduction of Marpessa, the wife of Ida. However, Robert Graves (1981) explicates the story of the twice-stolen bride of Marpessa. Evenus, the son of Ares and the father of Marpessa, challenged the suitors of Marpessa in chariot races, in an attempt to keep her a virgin. Idas "had driven to Aetolia, and carried Marpessa away from the midst of a band of dancers" (p. 72). She was again stolen by Apollo, and a duel pursued between Ida and Apollo. Homer alludes to this in *The Iliad,* thus: Idas "drew his powerful bow against Lord Phoebus, Apollo himself, when fighting the god for the trim-ankled Marpessa, who had mournfully cried when the far-working god snatched her away" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book IX, Lines 643-645 & 648- 649). We find another one of his bride-stealing victims, Europa, mentioned in *The Iliad*. About the kidnapping of Europa, Homer writes that "Nor when I loved the daughter of far-famed Phoenix,

who bore me Minos and godlike Rhadamanthus" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book XIV, Lines 365-367). The woman Homer refers to as the daughter of far-famed Phoenix is Europa, the mother of Rhadamanthus and Minos, whose abduction is often quoted in mythology. Similarly, Homer's mention of Hades and awesome Persephone (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book IX, Line 523) is also intriguing, as Persephone was the stolen wife of Hades. Zeus promises his daughter Persephone to his brother Hades without the knowledge of Persephone or her mother, and emboldens his brother to abduct her ("Persephone," Encyclopedia Mythica. 2005).

Similarly, in the mythical world of Tamil literature, Lord Shiva, one of the trinities of Hinduism, is credited with abducting his first wife, incurring the enmity of his father-in-law, Dakshan. For example, in the version of the story narrated by Eck (2012, p. 195), when Sati, the abducted wife, returns to the father's house to attend a *yagna* (grand prayer), she immolates herself due to her father's scorn towards her and her husband. Sati, the loyal wife, gave the eponym for the praxis of women jumping into the fire on their husbands' demise. Interestingly, this is the only bride-stealing evident in the entire mythology of India, other than the abduction of Sita by Ravana which has historical implications. ("Sati," Women in World History). These mythological abductions affirm the gendered view of referencing the subservient status of women. These simple textual events present the attitude caused by the action of men in a male- centered society within the limited approach that women had always been looked upon as sex objects. Therefore, the origin and the conceptual analysis of the practice and the

literature available from experts' views must be looked into for theoretical formulations and clarifications.

**Bridal Stealing: Literature Review**

Recent research on bride-stealing is sparse, and Ayres' (1974) article on *Bride Theft and Raiding for Wives in Cross-Cultural Perspective* is one of the few that takes a look at the dynamics of the issue. Ayres (1974) defines bride- stealing as "the forcible abduction of a woman for the purpose of marriage, without her foreknowledge or consent of her parents or guardians" (p. 238). It is a quantitative study on bride-stealing as an extension and re-examination of Tylor's (1889) work which, Ayres claims, was the first systematic study. However, John Ferguson McLennan (1970) had dealt with the fact and form of marriage by capture in detail (p. 12). His perspective on the issue is similar to Tylor's, as both of them delineate the capture of women as a "rude form of life" [*sic*], disguised under a variety of symbolic forms. They argue that, in the absence of documented evidence, the symbolism of reverence for the past leads to the investigation of the origin of a phenomenon. Thus, they contend that the corresponding realities can be inferred from the unwritten history of people of ancient times.

Expanding on the work of Tylor, Ayres' (1974) discussion throws light on the practices of mock and genuine bride theft (p. 238). Mock practice in contemporaneous marriages is the symbolic form that explicates the presence of such practice among different races in ancient times. Ayres' approach is cross-cultural oriented and quantitative, with no graphic descriptions of the abductions of women such as those

disclosed in Brownmillers' *Against Our Will* (1975). While Ayres combs into the paradigms and dichotomies of "mock" and "genuine" bride thefts, based on the analyses arrived at by E.B. Tylor from sifting through ancient cultures, Brownmiller (1975) sifts more into biblical and historical abductions of war-related crimes of ancient cultures. The essentials of mock ceremonial ritual, according to McLennan (1970), create a link between presentism and historicism. He explicates the significance of past presentism of mock practices in contemporaneous marriages to argue that it reflects the old practice. The mock customary praxis of bride-stealing is the best key that accounts for the corresponding realities of the unwritten history as a continuum of prior customs (p. 12). Hughes (2005) notes that,

> "The Greek author Plutarch tells us that the Spartans endorsed 'marriage by capture.' In this (to us) curious rite, a girl was taken from her ancestral home to her chosen husband's home at the age of 18 and dressed as a boy. The prospective husband would come from the all-male military camp where he lived, and "was expected to seize his betrothed," and "copulate with his androgynous bride" (p. 82).

The infrequency of their meetings and consequent abstinence were attributed to promoting a vigorous offspring. The existence of such a period of prudery, an early period of austere virtue which is observed as the shadow of former delicacy, did not have a trace among the Dorians, or the Pelasgi, or the Achaeans (McLennan, 1970, P. 12). He also notes that feigning to steal the bride is mandatory to make the marriage

valid. He substantiates his stand with the authority of historians Herodotus and Plutarch who describe the mock marriage custom of the Dorians. He adds that the customs of ancient Dorians were not based on the maidenly coyness of Spartans, but conversely, these customs, according to McLennon (1970), represent them "as savage [*sic*] as the Khonds, with whom they agreed in cultivating a religion requiring human sacrifices" (p. 12). McLennan also observes that this practice of mock bride-stealing prescribed as a marriage ceremony still prevails in many cultures. Khonds in the hill tracts of India, Kalmucks, Tungusic peoples (e.g., Evenkis) and Kamchadal (Itel'men) peoples have, to mention a few, mock bride-stealing practices. (It should be noted that the Itel'men probably shifted from matrilineal to patrilineal social organization under the influence of expanding Tungusic groups.)

A similar custom prevailed among the French, Bedouin Arabs, Nogay Tartars and Welsh until recently (McLennan, 1970, p. 17). Therefore, it is confirmed that this practice originated from patriarchal tribes with little cultural respect for women. These rituals are, basically, symbolic conceptions of "stubborn facts" handed down from generation to generation, as Geertz (1973) points out. These "stubborn facts" of Geertz (1973, p. 38) can be interpreted as "memes" of a society that persist and are transmitted from one generation to the next. The mock custom is symbolically extended in present day mock-practice to remind us of bygone real-life events in accordance with local conditions. Furthermore, on scrutinizing disparate cultures, McLennan (1970) concludes that women were captured in "barbarous" times in

essentially lawless communities. The exploration of the violent activities of the nomadic invaders of the epics supports McLennan's (1970) theory that they are related to the "lawlessness" of certain communities (p. 12). Though Barnes (1999) calls McLennan's theories outdated, his article tests McLennan's theories, culling out marriage by capture from modern ethnographies of exotic cultures. Hence, as history has it, though bride-stealing is directed towards women, they were not the only targets of the wars led by these violent people.

**Bride-Stealing as a Misconception of Misogyny**

Bride-stealing events of the epics are misconstrued as misogynistic by many, supporting the view that women were marginalized by their kith and kin in ancient times. Contrarily, they were only the victims of war waged by the nomadic invaders. Bride-stealing is one of the war atrocities committed on women as a part of a plundering way of life portrayed in the Homeric epics. It is not misogyny *per se*: these women simply lived in the times of upheaval, so it is the impact of war. The war stemmed from the invasion of these nomadic tribes. There was a pattern of mobile people from the marginal lands invading and plundering the settled seafaring traders for their wealth. The incursions of these nomadic people whose way of life included plundering led to the warfare seen in the epics. Hence, this dissertation examines the origins of bride-stealing as linked to war atrocities rather than to misogynistic cultural attributes.

The onset of patriarchy is one of the reasons, feminists strongly believe, that caused the marginalization of women. The violent people who believed in the supremacy of male power subdued the heiresses in attempts to gain economic and political power in late Bronze Age Greece. Helen's abduction, for example, emerges out of this transformation of social order. Studies suggest that the misogyny reflected in the epics is circumstantial, and a corollary of war. Brownmiller (1975) reviews the capture of females by force as an act of ancient patriarchs forging their own male power (p. 20). In the same vein, Ayres (1974) brings to our notice how Tylor hypothesized that bride theft arose during the transition from maternal to paternal forms of social organization (p. 249). This paves the way to examine whether the events of bride-stealing in the epics under study are misogynistic reflections or an onset of patriarchal social transformation in ancient Greece and in ancient India. This dissertation also examines whether or not the women of the epics lived in the times of social transformation from matrilineal- egalitarian to patriarchal society as these "lawless" tribes consorted to establish male supremacy.

Therefore, the major purpose of this dissertation as outlined in the first chapter is to explore the dynamics of bride-stealing within a framework of inductive qualitative research based on relationships between historical theories and the similarities and differences found in the texts. They suggest that the presence of bride-stealing events in mythology, literature, history, and contemporary society is symptomatic of the cultural evolution of certain groups that indulge in violent activities. Before these wars

took place, women lived in matrilineal societies in which egalitarianism prevailed, with mostly peaceful domestic harmony.

The second chapter of the dissertation explains the methodological process as involved in collecting data from different disciplines in order to attain a holistic perspective on the phenomenon of bride-stealing. It justifies the choice of an interdisciplinary approach, employing theories and methodologies from disciplines of history, anthropology, and archaeology.

The third chapter of the dissertation focuses on whether bride-stealing is simply a byproduct of the atrocities of war, or whether it is simply culturally-sanctioned misogynistic behavior. The chapter revolves around the atrocities of war, and indicates that the ill-treatment of the abusive people does not stop with women. Thus, it suggests that the maltreatment of women did not emerge from gender-specific realities.

The fourth chapter revolves around the historical implications and explications of the wars narrated in the epics. The historicity of war is scrutinized with the use of anthropological, archeological, and literary evidence. It traces the migratory patterns of the Proto-Greeks and Indo-Aryans and their cultural assimilation with sedentary cultures.

The fifth chapter focuses on a componential analysis of bride-stealing within a larger societal context. It further centers on the impact of bride-stealing physically, psychologically, and socially. It analyzes the nature of the custom of bride-stealing among the nomadic invaders.

The sixth chapter traces the narrations of bride-stealing from historical sources, and explicates how sati originated from the customary practice of bride-stealing. It illustrates how bride-stealing was embedded within the culture of the nomadic invaders.

The seventh chapter is about the circumstances under which the bride-stealing events of Helen and Sita occurred in both the epics. It extends to the abduction of Chryses, Breisis, and Ruma. The motives behind the action and the strategies that followed are dealt with in depth. It also brings out the aftermaths the abductions entailed.

The eighth chapter examines whether the abduction of women was misogyny or the transformation of social order. The Trojan War and the Aryan and Dravidian War deal with the transformation of social order in the history of ancient Greece and ancient India, respectively. This chapter also scrutinizes the status of women before and during the wars to evaluate the impact of intrusion of a nomadic culture on a relatively peaceful society. Research shows that the social order of the Old World underwent a drastic change from matrilineal egalitarianism to power-driven patriarchy, beginning in the Late Bronze Age. Bride-stealing became a facet of this changing societal pattern, and the affected women, portrayed in the epics, lived in times of upheaval. Laws were then created in these male-dominated societies to govern women under strict control.

The last chapter traces a literary pattern reinforcing the idea that the victors destroyed the cultures they clashed with and absorbed much of their culture into their

own. It further clarifies briefly why we continue to see such incidents of bride-stealing and related gender violence in contemporaneous societies.

# Chapter 2: Methodology

## Research Design

This chapter explores the design and methodology employed in pursuing the scholary research. It illustrates why the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach is an appropriate causal-comparative research design for the configuration of meanings of bride-stealing in past societies. It demonstrates how reductionist analytical theory was applied to lay the groundwork for understanding the phenomenon of bride-stealing. This retrospective look clarifies the underpinnings of the origin of the praxis. It paves the way to examine the status of women historically, anthropologically and archaeologically.

Cross-cultural prehistoric marriage practices were investigated to evaluate feminist views on chronological changes in the status of women. Application of literary theories such as New Criticism and New Historicism investigate what guides the movements of the operation. Thus, it reaches the threshold between the contextual assumptions that the epics under study leave behind and the historical background in a way that sheds light on the real state of affairs. It concurs with the fact that literature mirrors life and culls out the historical elements that provide insight to the human condition. In that, it evaluates oral tradition as a historical methodology.

Furthermore, it explores the need to do comparative literary studies and cross-cultural studies to acquire a holistic perspective on the role of women in past societies. Finally, in its attempt to reconstruct the status of ancient women through the analysis of

bride-stealing, it combines a family of ethnographic, archaeological, and linguistic methods to explore the notion that women had a viable collective identity in ancient times, despite the overwhelming misogynistic elements present in the epics.

The major issue of this research revolved around the status of women in the modern world compared to that of former times. The frustration of women of today echoes in Kingston's (2006) statement: "'Wife'… Four letters, one syllable, simple or so it seems. Yet this common word has become one of the most complex signifiers in English Literature, weighted by past definitions, blurred by personal biases" (p. 1). As many feminists contend, gender difference is socially constructed and hence, as Weedon (1999) claims that it is "an effect of relations of knowledge and power which permeates all areas of life" (p. 5). Lather (1991) writes, "Very simply, to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the center of one's enquiry" (p. 71). Therefore, this study seeks to explore the relationship of women's position historically to the mainstream of social constructs in order to enhance our understanding of their standing today.

The specific subject of this research is grounded in the causal-comparative relationships between the praxis of bride-stealing and other social phenomena in order to evaluate its occurrence in ancient times. Adopting a qualitative design, this dissertation revolves around the inception of evolutionary changes in the practice of bride-stealing in comparative style, utilizing two ancient works in the genre of epics: *The Iliad,* the great Greek epic by Homer, and *The Kamba Ramayanam*, the most

important Tamil epic. The most striking commonality that stands out in both of these epics is abduction of women. The subject of Homer's masterpiece *The Iliad* is a ghastly war between the Achaeans and the Trojans over Helen, the stolen wife of Menelaus. Similarly, *The Kamba Ramayanam* is the story of the war between Rama, the Aryan prince, and Ravana, the Dravidian king, over the stolen wife of Rama. This issue has been approached from an interdisciplinary stance which enables delving into different disciplines with "Studies in Cross-Cultural Classics and Mythology," and to find thematic parallels to argue effectively citing them. Therefore, it is essentially feminist research that focuses on the origin and causes of bride-stealing through textual and contextual analysis to create a breakthrough in the interrelated understanding of this phenomenon.

More specifically the purpose of this research is to answer the questions, "Is it misogyny that was the reason behind the phenomenon of bride-stealing or was it one of the atrocities of war?" and "Does the bride-stealing reflect misogyny, or was it the transformation of social order that made the women victims?" Thus, it analyzes the status of women before and during the wars in order to evaluate changes before and after the wars. Barbara Ayres' (1974) reexamination of E. B. Tylor's (1889) hypotheses on the capture of women for wives and McLennan's (1876) studies on "primitive marriages" [*sic*] led to the focus of this research.

Collecting data follows as the next crucial step in the research. As primary sources, the epics *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam* yielded much of the needed data. Close reading of both the epics was indispensable to collect appropriate data. The societies reflected in the epics were also scrutinized in order to gather relevant historical, anthropological, and archaeological evidence. Literary criticisms presented more data. A peek into the historical, political, economical and social contexts of both ancient Greece and ancient India rendered valuable information about the status of women diachronically. Various studies in gender, kinship, and feminism offered data as secondary sources. Related literature reviews of bride-stealing and mock marriage practices contributed additional data.

In order to accomplish the fundamental task of research, there are two broad categories: "quantitative and the qualitative" (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso, 1998, p. 122). Gay and Airasian (2003) assert, "Both quantitative and qualitative researchers deal with hypotheses, but the nature of each approach differs" (p. 62). A comparative analysis of potential research methodologies sheds light on why the chosen research design is most appropriate for this research.

Locke et al. (1998) clearly state: "As the name implies, quantitative research deals with things that can be counted, and it often uses statistical manipulations of numbers to process data and summarize results" (p. 121). The two major quantitative methodological designs in the research field are "works that treat statistics and statistical methods, incorporating examples drawn from one or the other discipline" as

mentioned by Floud 1979; Thomas 1976 (Barber & Berdan, 1998, p. 178), and "works that conceptualize a problem and use quantitative data to solve it," according to Aydelotte 1971; Beringer 1978; Darcy and Rohrs 1995; Johnson 1978 (Barber & Berdan, 1998, p. 179). The functions of quantitative methodology as explained by Barber and Barden (1998) are first that the quantitative data can substantiate a theory which would otherwise be merely a subjective opinion, and secondly, that it brings in valuable information more vigorously. Due to their comparative nature and its capability to apply statistical interpretation, quantitative methodologies are useful. However, they do have problems in their applicability. The genuineness of the data presented in the document, their accuracy when applied holistically, the precision with which they are presented, the ease with which they can be interpreted, and possible omissions and gaps that stem out of poor archival management need to be watched for.

The data extracted from quantitative method can be analyzed in the following way. Source-oriented content analysis with the factors of reality-median model might be trustworthy, but, interval analysis is time consuming. Most researchers conduct an informal study of the documents rather than to go through the rituals of quantitative writing. In a quantitative method, the collected data go through statistical analysis for the desired result. Ayres' (1974) quantitative study deals with the statistical analysis of bride-stealing, and while it is applicable for her mode of research, it will not provide suitable answers for the research questions chosen here. The application of this

method would not satisfactorily facilitate the data collection and data analysis for explication of hypotheses which emerged out of the phenomenon of bride-stealing.

Another approach to data analysis represented by the use of the qualitative method. Locke et al. (1998) explained, “Qualitative research is now represented in many fields of study, and its influence in the social sciences has been growing. The paradigm also has been growing through a recent period of rapid diversification, with the creation of a number of distinctive research traditions” (p. 139). Two of these traditions, or subcategories, of qualitative research are critical and interpretive.

According to Hillway (1964), “In certain fields - philosophy and literature, for example - one may be dealing with ideas a great deal more than facts. Research may then consist largely of critical interpretation of these ideas” (p. 101). Hillway (1964) continued, “Logic must be thought of as the language of reasoning (relating to quality), just as mathematics is the language of measurement (relating to quantity or size). The use of logic, therefore, is essential to scientific inquiry” (p. 13).

The tools of critical and interpretive research, the major components of logic in the qualitative method, are the appropriate ones for the topic of this dissertation. In order to understand why women were stolen in ancient times, critical interpretation is more important than numerical data. Hence, this methodology is more applicable to this research. The epics under study demand the explication of the cultural elements of different ethnicities. The diverse methods adopted in this dissertation encompassing the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, history, geography, and linguistics, add

dynamism to the overall perspective of the phenomenon of bride-stealing. Therefore, the interdisciplinary approach is the best one for this study.

**Analysis from an Interdisciplinary Stance**

The fundamental epistemology of interdisciplinary study is the integration of insights, theories, and research strategies that are used in many fields to arrive at a better understanding of a concept. The elusiveness in literature or historical vacuum that a study of classics leaves behind can be surmounted through study of anthropological, archaeological and religious analysis. The heroism which the epics idealize can be explainable as a denial of justice to the conquered within the framework of the conflict between civilizations. The combined study of classics and history sheds light on Rama, the protagonist of *The Kamba Ramayanam,* as an unflinching conqueror rather than as an embodiment of virtues as some would project. The contradictory viewpoints of the epic and history are worth analyzing; the epic boasts of Rama's victory as triumph of good over evil, however, the migratory pattern of the nomadic Indo-Europeans (previously known as Indo-Aryans) into India around 1,800 B.C. affirms the historical background for the occasion of the epic involving ethnicities conflicting over power at the most fundamental level. Incidentally, the underlying hegemonic attitude of Rama as a subjugator can never be demonstrated in the study of epic alone where Rama becomes the object of worship with an aura of deep moral seriousness. By the same token, the heroes of *The Maha Bharatha,* the other ancient Sanskrit epic of India, are referred to as marauders in history books whereas they are portrayed in the epic as

spiritually refined people with divine moral codes. Corresponding archaeological evidence is congruent with history and linguistics in clarifying the usurpation of lands by Indo-European nomads from Dravidian rulers including Ravana, Tataka, and Surpanaka (Kuzhandhai, 2006, pp. 69-71). Correlatively, the anthropology of religion and mythological studies laid bare the ruse of the conquerors who imperialistically planted a superior God with unbelievable virtues in the minds of the conquered in order to control them with fear. An in-depth study of mythology unfurls the collective consciousness of the victors, and, hence, paves the way to the truth of the matter. In a paradigmatic vein, the ancient history of Greece reveals the invasions of nomadic people and assimilation of cultures, in that Minoan culture (which may have been an assimilation of previously-existing regional Aegean cultures) becomes syncretized as Mycenaean culture. This suggests that the Trojans of *The Iliad* may have diffused from the Minoan culture since the Minoans had women goddesses and the Trojans had priestesses. The Achaeans who vanquished the Trojans belong to one such nomadic tribe mentioned in *The Iliad,* and they had a predominant male god. The dynamism that interdisciplinary studies proffer, sets systematic explications for political, moral, and economic ideologies, and renders social situations meaningful. Archaeological discoveries further extend our knowledge by broadening the range of data, enabling the expression of meanings which otherwise cannot be expressed in symbolic frames. Therefore, in an attempt to understand social structures and institutions as well as single events such as bride-stealing, a reconstructionist/constructionist approach has been adopted with

theoretical explications from different disciplines, delving into nearly five thousand years of history of ancient India and ancient Greece.

**New Criticism**

Following the footsteps of formalistic approach, "New Criticism," sprang up with its systematic and methodological formalistic approach. It was I. A. Richards who connected the internal and external world of poetry. E.D. Hirsch developed on Heideggar's theme of understanding from the writer's point of view. He argued that it is not the understanding that is what is crucial, but understanding it the way the author meant it , especially at the time of his [*sic*] writing, is essential. An author goes through a sea of change from his [*sic*] first writing to the successive ones. His [*sic*] ideas and outlook on life could have tremendous changes due to multiple experiences. To get the better understanding of it, a close study to grasp the intrinsic texture of the text is the only answer. The conventions followed in the genre of his [*sic*] time, and the meaning of the words at his [*sic*] time would throw some light on the true meaning of the words. Both the epics have been studied very thoroughly with their historical and literary background in mind. The intensive reading of the text, the recommendation of "New Criticism," also created an awareness of denotative and connotative implications infused within. Therefore, New Criticism has been extensively used to perceive the innerworkings of the author. Intensive reading of the text, the recommendation of "New Criticism," rendered both literary and historical data. The contextual historical data created the awareness of denotative and connotative implications infused within.

**New Historicism**

The new historicist approach in literary criticism encouraged reading sociological, medical, legal and political documents alongside literary texts (Jaggar, 2008, p. 5). The cultural attributes extracted from Odysseus' scar in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (2003) took the literary world by storm, and since then, so much ink has been spilled over the interpretative skills of the author, for laying bare the historical background of Odysseus through a hunting expedition. This notion that literature is cultural expression is supported by Brewton (2005) in his literary and cultural theory. He observes,

> "Much of the intellectual legacy of 'New Historicism,' and 'Cultural Materialism' can be felt in the 'Cultural studies,' movement in the department of literature, a movement not identifiable in terms of a single theoretical school, but one that embraces a wide array of perspectives- media studies, social criticism, anthropology and literary theory- as they apply to the general study of culture."

This notion of viewing literature in a divergent angle is supported by Scott Wilson (2007) in his statement: "New Historicism has not so much opposed to traditional forms of literary study, as revitalized and replaced them in a new form." Instead of the traditional form of relishing literature for its aesthetical pleasure, an intellectual inquiry

into the culture embedded in it emerges here. This is an exemplar to cite that literature is an expression of "our self, other, and world," to follow the trope of Gadamer.

Stephen Greenblatt and Alan Sinfield are the leading proponents of New Historicism. The cultural materialism it stresses, according to F. R. Leavis, is that it fills "the literary and moral void hollowed out by critical theory." While realizing that the lack of theorizing is the demerit of New Historicism, the proponents believe that understanding a culture through the emic account of cultural perspective is integral. Auerbach's (2003) description of Homer's scar is an exemplar for extracting history from the text (p. 4). On the whole, as Klages (2006) put it, "New Historicism as a strategy for analyzing cultural meaning draws on the work of anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973), who took from Claude Levi Strauss the idea that 'culture' is a system of signs and codes that govern behavior of individuals, groups, and institutions" (p. 124).

The evocation of the past or the reconstruction of past events can be demarcated through the use of literary, ethnographic, historical, and archaeological data. Combing for the epistemology of the past in terms of accurate information stems from the complexity of methodological difficulties in analyzing ethnographic, literary, historical, and archaeological data. Any possible omissions and gaps that stem from poor archival management need to be watched for. Hence, as Durkheim (1899c II: i-vi) put it, "In order to understand the social phenomena of today to the degree necessary to shape their development, it is not sufficient to observe what is given in our current experience…. It is necessary to know how it came about, that is, to have traced in

history the manner in which it is progressively composed" (Lamanna, 2002, p. 39). Lamanna (2002) continues that according to Durkheim (1909 a: 280-81), history is needed to explore causation, and that a casual act that takes place or a social form which comes into existence could only be captured in its distant past (Lamanna, 2002, p. 72). Through this means, this dissertation gleans the historical materials on bride-stealing to analyze the interdependent cultural, social and political aspects.

**Historical Methodology**

Concerning historical research, Gay and Airasian (2003) state that it "is the systematic collection and evaluation of data related to past occurrences for the purpose of describing causes, effects, or trends of those events. It helps to explain current events and to anticipate future ones" (p. 166). Though this study fulfills the description of historical research, it entails the "selection, relevance, significance and objectivity," according to Munslow (1997, Intro: p. 5) which may be elusive in obtaining the totality of historical epistemology. However, the historical research approach is ideal for this research in conjunction with other disciplines such as anthropology since a better understanding of the epics under study demands the explication of the cultural elements of different ethnicities. Hence, the historical evidence adds dynamism to the overall perspective.

**Oral Tradition as Historical Methodology**

Historical methodology makes use of the unwritten materials available for analyses which include folklore and oral tradition. Oral tradition may have emerged

initially as a source of entertainment in preliterate societies all over the world. Anthropologically, as Bronislaw Malinowski reasons, “the equal humanity of all human groups was to demonstrate that each of them possessed the same kinds of institutions or cultural universals, designed to achieve the overall goals for the group’s members” (as cited in Lavenda & Schultz, 2007, p. 17). Oral tradition is a cultural universal, and every society, regardless of its cultural tradition, started out with oral storytelling as a common practice before written tradition evolved. One aspect of historical methodology stems from the extension of unique cultural features from the oral tradition of many of the classics. However, the verbal testimony and chain of transmission present in oral tradition only comprises of historical sources of a special nature. Vansina (1965) asserts that “In those parts of the world inhabited by peoples without writing, oral tradition forms the main available source for a reconstruction of the past” (p. 1). He also reiterates that all oral traditions “contain a kernel of truth,” and “the reliability of these sources should be examined according to the usual canons of historical methodology” (p. 8). Munslow (1997), on summarizing the mainstream on the literariness of history, alleges that “In accepting that narrative ‘is a universal mode of organizing human knowledge’ and that there is a gap between ‘reality and its narration’, narrative, nevertheless, ‘is an inappropriate vehicle for historical explanation’” (p. 54). Hence, arriving at a well-established sequencing of events over time is one of the problems of developing constructionist explanatory frameworks. Therefore, the

hierarchical view and the motivational ploy of the writer were focused textually and contextually with the political panaceas in which the literary characters were involved.

**Anthropological Analysis**

According to the anthropologists Carol and Melvin Ember (1973, chapter 15), Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher of the 6th century B.C., noted that "A man [*sic*] never keeps his [*sic*] feet in the same water" (the authentic quotation is "Upon those who step into the same rivers different and again different waters flow" [Kirk, 1962, p. 367]). Culture is continually changing in part as a result of the creation and diffusion of ideas. The study of civilizations and the migratory patterns of ethnicities concerned aids in the comprehension of or inter-cultural contacts which formed the foundation of the epics. For example, the anthropology of religion testifies to the conceptualizing and defining of religion as it differs from people to people.

Timothy Fitzgerald (2000) highlights the terms and concepts of religion thus: "'religion' is a distinctly Western term and concept, and that its contemporary uses and meanings have been shaped in significant measure by their applications in promoting capitalism and colonialism" (p. 1). Melford Spiro (1966) views that religion is "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with postulated superhuman beings" (p. 96). These two statements shed considerable light on the subject of religion depicted in the epics.

**Feminist Analysis**

Feminist theory deals with the concerns and understanding of women of all races, classes and sexual orientations. Finding and rediscovering women from history, reevaluating the writings about women and promoting "women writers" to comprehend feminist issues became the concerns of feminist historians. Textuality and sexuality play a vital part here. Harding (1992) writes that "It is the familiar methods of historical research , such as reinterpreting existing legal records, that have been used in producing the new scholarship" (p. 15). Nagy and Hesse-Biber (2007) writes that "The information produced and collected by local and grassroots organization is extremely helpful" (p. 5). Since bride-stealing is highly gender-specific, many feminists' views have been taken into account to assessing appropriate literary and historical data.

Finally, the cumulative intermingling of the subjects guided the way to a holistic view of the subject regarding whether the bride-stealing phenomena seen in both the epics *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam* reflect misogyny or whether they are circumstantial in nature and simply reflect times of social transformation and hence victims of war.

## Chapter 3: Bride-Stealing as One of the Atrocities of War

### Introduction

This chapter explores the argument that bride-stealing was one of the atrocities of war or is simply culturally-sanctioned misogynistic behavior. It extrapolates the misogynistic attitudes seen in the epics such as femicide, raping of women, and female slavery, and tests them with similar events concerning men to evaluate through logical reasoning whether they are representations of the heinousness of war or simply indicative of culturally-sanctioned misogyny. It concludes that the carnages committed were not solely directed at women.

It studies and identifies a type of behavior, an aggressive attitude which is akin to the sign of a supreme hunter whose tough memes display as a unique temperament of men from marginalized land. The slaughters and other related crimes, committed during wars with the aim of economic gain (though sometimes this was done for other reasons such as to display status, to counter a potential military challenge, or to exact vengeance/punishment), reflect tribal warfare conducted without “codes” of warfare associated with contemporary state-level societies. These atrocities had tremendous effects, such as leading the society into the so-called “Dark Ages” as they had in ancient Greece.

This chapter illustrates how under these conditions women and children suffered along with men who tried to protect their wealth and families. Additionally, it revolves around the sole intent of the plunderers whose target was to grapple the wealth of

others as their dominant intent. The apparently misogynistic elements we see in the epics do not arise out of a simple hatred towards women, but stem from the desire for others' wealth which may be related to a display of prestige and power.

The misogynistic elements such as femicide, necrophilia, maiming, and female slavery are scrutinized as related to the "lawlessness" of the tribal people who regarded themselves as descended from a theriomorphic mythical ancestor (Eliade, 1981, p. 36). Eliade (1981) observes how these "nomadic horsemen from central Asia behaved toward the sedentary populations that they attacked like carnivores hunting, strangling, and devouring the herbivores of the steppe or the farmers' cattle" (p. 36). Thus, this chapter culls out the misogynistic elements seen in the epics, and argues that these activities were not aimed at women alone.

Bride-stealing, one of the actions that is considered by some a reflection of cultural misogyny, is nothing but the "lawlessness" of men of war, which can be seen in part as a rationalization for obtaining women not just as sexual partners but for the economic purpose of providing different household labor in some ancient societies. McLennan (1876) believes that "the preface of general history must be compiled from the materials presented by barbarism" [sic] (p. 4). He also believes that we have as much information about the advancement of the historical nations as about "very rude forms of life" [sic] of which we also have accounts. The epics resonate with these "rude forms of life" [sic] clashing with historical nations.

**Misogyny Explicated**

The Oxford English Dictionary defines misogyny as "hatred of women," and describes a woman-hater as "misogyne" and "misogynist" ("misogyny"). The word misogyny is derived from the Greek word *misogynaios* ((μισογύναιος). Radford and Russell (1992) bemoan the fact that, although misogyny is as old as patriarchy itself, it has rarely been the subject of feminist analysis (preface, p. xi). In the same vein, Ehrenberg (1989) surmises:

> "The degree of social and political power held by women in prehistoric societies is a subject to which little attention has as yet been paid by archaeologists, although archaeological evidence may be able to provide indications of wealth and status, and hence of the degree of social stratification within a society"(p. 11).

Consequently, when we direct our attention to the major reason why theorists have shied away from cultural particularities of women, what we tend to find are attitudes that accord with Freudian explorations of matriphobia and matricide which, "represent analysis and interpretations of psychological and cultural misogyny" (Jonte-Pace, 2001). Going back to classical times, Aristotle's "Silence is a woman's glory" can be a postulated as an underlying misogynic statement. However, in contrast to Aristotle's woman's glory, the historian, Thucydides, expounds on why a woman's shrieking does not find a place in history. The Peloponnesian War has been described by Thucydides, according to Bell (1973) who

> "devoted a minimum of space to the mothers, wives, daughters, and women friends of the men who lived in the times of war, and most of his references to women point out that the wives of defeated warriors were sold into slavery. In most passages referring to women, he recommended that they should be neither seen nor heard. His opinion was that wailing widows were an unhealthy symbol for a community engaged in fighting for its life" (p. 8).

The Peloponnesian War took place in the 4th century B.C., and by then, Greece was under the control of proto-Greeks. Therefore, we see that the war narrations in history and literature in the classical world run rife with misogynistic display, reflecting the fact that misogyny was well established before Aristotle's time.

**History of Misogyny in Literature**

Western philosophy that is most often associated with Plato and Aristotle is meshed with misogynistic implications. Coole (1993) asserts, "They already wrote within a cultural tradition of misogyny and a social context of women's subjugation" (p. 4). Aristotle, an admirer of Homer, identified with Agamemnon and Achilles in his description of the master-slave relationship between husband and wife, and it is this 'teleological account of nature' that captured the imagination of Hegel and Marx for their political philosophy.

Engles, the co-author of *The Communist Manifesto* with Marx, saw that the power of men to exploit women systematically springs from the existence of surplus wealth, and more directly from the state, social stratification, and the control of property by men. Marx and Engles, based on Lewis Henry Morgan's work with the Iroquois, published the existence of an original matriarchy coupled by the development of state-level societies. Reiter (1975) extrapolates that according to Marx 1972:171, historically and morally, "a wife is among the necessities of a worker" (p. 70). The moral element for men emerges from men utilizing a woman as a helpmate both in domestic chores and in bed. This is overt misogyny, deriving from Western philosophy that thrived in the fourth century B.C.

Misogyny, according to Rogers (1973), is a prominent theme, the origins of which can be traced back to the ancient myths of the Jews and Greeks, expressing the tenets of Judeo-Christian tradition (preface, p. x). She argues that the Biblical stories of the Old Testament, which teem with misogyny, sometimes, expressed a harsh anti-feminism: Eve was made from Adam's rib, and hence she is only a "help meet"; this story, she argues, implies that Eve (woman) is inherently a more imperfect creature than Adam (man), and it justified the subjection of women both explicitly and implicitly.

It can be argued that gender inequality or dominance in any form does serious impact to society. As Beauvoir (1983) claims, "Eve was not fashioned at the same time as the man; she was not fabricated from a different substance, nor of the same clay as was used to model Adam: she was taken from the flank of the first male. Not even her

birth was independent" (p. 141). Biblically-based patriarchy denies its justification. The same Bible, according to Sommerville (1995), advocates the divine right of kings, enforces men as rulers and women as subjects. Sommerville (1995) refers to God's laws which may be obeyed unconditionally, and any active resistance would be severely punished. She continues that "political power could best be understood as fatherly power. Children did not choose their father since they were born in subjection, but they were naturally obliged to obey him" (p. 8). However, class war, according to Crane-Seeber and Crane (2010), is the main culprit for gender oppression. As they point out, men with their culturally-driven prejudice not only oppress women, but also breed boys with the same attitude. Feminists believe that research should concentrate on why women attained lower status and how it originated in given societies.

**Feminist Interpretations of Misogyny**

Feminist theory deals with the concerns and understanding of women of all races, classes and sexual orientations. Sandra Gilbert defines feminist critics as possessing an agenda to "decode and demystify all the disguised questions and answers that have always shadowed the connections between texuality and sexuality, genre and gender, psychosexualidentity and cultural authority" (1980, pp. 16-24). Guerin et al. (1992) continue that "Despite their diversity, feminist critics largely agree on a threefold purpose: to expose patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices, to promote discovery and revaluation of literature by women, and to examine social, cultural, and psychosexual contexts of literature and criticism" (p. 184).

According to liberal feminists, the only way to resist misogyny is to break with tradition and refrain from slavish obedience to religious precepts in order to gain self-confidence and self-esteem. While cultural feminists believe that gender differences are socially constructed, medical feminists concentrate on biological determinism. Jaggar (2008), a proponent of biological determinism, states that biologically determinist theories justify the subordination of women by suggesting that certain features of human social life are uniquely determined by the constitution of human beings (pp. 105-106). Though she is linking environmental determinism as one of the causes of the subjugation of women, this explanation is not satisfactory because we do not see the same behavioral pattern among all men who are in the homogenous environment. In addition, it is a broad theory that deals with gender issues, distinguishing the constitution of human beings as men and women. However, the origin of misogyny is the key to explicating how it evolved into a byproduct of class warfare.

**Theoretical Analysis**

Ulin (2001) writes that "For Malinowski, to understand the nature of a particular institution or cultural phenomenon the investigator must analyze its function within the total social system" (p. 36). Malinowski (1953) considers that the information collected through observations "are of unquestionable scientific value, in which we can clearly draw the line between, on the one hand, the results of direct observation and of native statements and interpretations, and on the other hand, the inferences of the author based on his common sense and psychological insight" (p. 3). Ulin notes that,

"While Boas was interested in understanding cultural phenomena in their context and that part of this comprehension involved the historical understanding of how the cultural phenomena achieved their particularity" (p. 36). To explicate the motives of social action, Lateiner (1989) mentions that "History is what men think, as well as what they do" (p. 77). Stressing the significance of social action, Geertz (1973) states that "behavior must be attended to, and with exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior, or, more precisely, social action that cultural forms find articulation (p. 17). This resonates with Weber's idea of "The structure of Social Action" (Keyes: Weber, 2002). For Weber, sociology is a science that studies the interpretive understanding of social action. He adds that "Action is 'social' in so far as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (Keyes: Weber, 2002). In bride- stealing, this concept is embellished by appending Marx's theory that every human action has a hidden want behind it (Eribon, 1998, p. 108). Therefore, the causal social actions imbued with their corollaries as effects of their wants render the epistemic situation upon which the traditional interpretation of the problem can be approached.

**Atrocities of War**

With the introduction of agriculture, Neolithic society underwent tremendous social changes. Woolfe (2008) states: "Farming communities became wealthier as people acquired material possessions on a scale beyond anything conceivable in a hunter-gatherer society" (p. 16). He further states that the Neolithic revolution spread

very unevenly around the globe. He demonstrates how Europeans encountered hunter-gatherer communities living in the 16th century as much as their ancestors had done 10,000 years before. The encounter between an egalitarian and a more complex, hierarchical society led to the clash between these two distinctly different societies. A series of atrocities committed during wars with the sole aim of economic and territorial gain had significant impacts on the sedentary civilizations. This chapter illustrates how the lives of women and children were left with indelible traces of cruelty. The misogynistic elements we see in the epics do not arise out of hatred towards women per se, but hatred that stemmed from conflicts between disparate cultures.

**Femicide**

Femicide, Radford and Russell (1992) claim, is "the misogynous killing of women" (p. 3). According to a United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) article on eliminating violence against women, femicide is an extreme form of gender-based violence that culminates in the murder of women and may include torture, mutilation, cruelty, and sexual violence. The causes and risk factors of this type of violence are linked to gender inequality, discrimination, and economic disempowerment and are the result of a systematic disregard for women's rights.

The murder of women in *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam* is characterized by the depravity of militant brutality. As Brownmiller (1975) puts it, according to precepts of military justice, killing is viewed as not only permissible but heroic behavior sanctioned by one's government (p. 32), and "War provides men with the perfect

psychological backdrop to give vent to their contempt for women" (p. 32). The psychological backdrop stems from issues such as fear of death in men that sways reasoning abilities and sanctifies the killing of women. The atrocities committed not only on women but also to men and its extension to even corpses attests to the display of extreme violence in men at war.

**Femicide in the epics**

*The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam* teem with misogynistic attitudes of men, and they shed an important light on the repercussions of war on women. The sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia is the first preeminent femicide we learn about among the ancient Greeks. The story goes like this: The Achaeans muster their armies to go to Troy to sack the city. They are at Aulis, waiting for a favorable wind for their onward journey for days together. Finally, the consultation of the Prophet Calchis affirms that, unless they propitiate the Goddess Artemis with the human sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia, the winds will not be favorable (Graves, 1957, vol.II, pp. 590-591).

Agamemnon sends a word to his wife Clytemnestra to bring his daughter at the pretext of getting her married to Achilles. Iphigenia is sacrificed and the ships sail towards Troy ("Iphigenia," *Mortal Women of the Trojan War).* Hence, Iphigenia is the woman who is the first victim of femicide in *The Iliad*. We hear from other narratives the consequences of this sacrifice that ended in the multiple murders of Agamemnon and Cassandra by Clytemnestra and her lover, and the slayings of Clytemnestra and her

lover by her son Orestes.

Thus, Cassandra, Helen's sister who was taken as Agamemnon's concubine becomes the next victim of femicide. Cytemnestra's murder can be defined as homicide as Orestes, her son killed her to take revenge on his father's death (*The Norton Anthology*, 2009, *The Odyssey*, Book I, verses 41-44). Polyxena, the daughter of King Priam and Hecuba was killed at the insistence of Achilles on his grave, as she had learned the secret of Achilles' heel and caused his death at the hands of Paris. "The blood having been shed did not stand or flow on the surface of the earth; the savage [*sic]* mound immediately swallowed and drank all the blood" (Seneca in *Troades*). The gruesome death of Polyxena is a heart-wrenching femicide of the Trojan War.

The first femicide in *The Kamba Ramayanam* comes from Rama's killing of Tataka. Rama and Lakshmana go with *Rishi* Vishwamitra to Dandaka forest to kill Tataka, a woman who changed a fertile soil into a wasteland. Vishwamitra tells Rama and Lakshmana, as mentioned by Rajagopalachari (1989), "I have brought you here to rid the forest of this great enemy. There is no doubt that this monster, who is a source of trouble to the rishis, will be destroyed by you" (p. 29). It is not clear how a woman could have changed the environment in this way. However, the study of ancient India topographically explicates the environmental changes that occurred in 2500 B.C. South India, beginning from Godavari River, was being ruled by Ravana and his clan. Tara was a queen of a region called *Vindhya saral* in the foothills of the Vindhya Mountains. The Vindhya Mountains geographically served as the northern border of South India. The

Aryans, who had been occupying the fertile Ganga River Basin, North India, with intent to colonize South India, entered the Dandaka forest area which was ruled by Tataka. Dandaka is another fertile basin formed by the second largest river Gothavari, "the Ganga of the South." The epic *Ramayana* by Valmiki and *The Kamba Ramayanam* by Kambar corroborate the fact that Viswamitra brought Rama and Lakshmana into the Dandaka forest: this may be part of their colonizing efforts, and that killing Tataka was a strategic goal of this colonizing activity. According to Kottak, (2006) "Colonialism is the political, social, economic, and cultural domination of a territory and its people by a foreign power for an extended time" (Kottak, 2006, chapter 17; see also Bremen and Shimazu, eds. 1999; Cooper and Stoler, eds. 1997). Precisely because of political expansion into Taraka's territory, a region consisting of fertile agricultural lands, Viswamitra and the sons of Dasaratha entered Dadaka forest and killed her and blamed her for the environmental changes (Kuzhandhai, 2006, pp. 57-58).

**Necrophilia**

Necrophilia is another misogynistic attitude that we find in ancient Greece. Achilles fought with the Amazon queen Penthesilea who entered the war in its final year after the death of Hector. He killed her and made love to her corpse (Alexander, 2009, p. 19). Necrolagnia, one of the philias, is the act of having intercourse with a corpse. Necrophilia Νεκροζ *("dead") and* φιλια (*philia; "love")* or thanatophilia, is classified as a paraphilia. Blanchard (2000) proposed a definition of paraphilia for Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)-5, delimiting a range of so-called normative sexuality and

defining paraphilia as any intense and persistent sexual interest other than that. *DSM-IV-TR* reads: "The essential features of a Paraphilia are recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors generally involving 1) nonhuman objects, 2) the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one's partner, or 3) children or other non-consenting persons that occur over a period of at least six months" (p. 572). Therefore, it is clear that Achilles had this sexual disorder, and war, as Brownmiller (1975) puts it, provided a psychological backdrop for Achilles to make love to a cadaver.

**Maiming**

Disfigurement of women is more manifest in *The Kamba Ramayanam* than in *The Iliad*, while rape and slavery, the byproducts of war which are predominant in *The Iliad,* are totally absent in *The Kamba Ramayanam.* Brownmiller (1975) avers: "Among the ancient Greeks, rape was also socially acceptable behavior well within the rules of warfare, an act without stigma for warriors who viewed the women they conquered as legitimate booty" (p. 33). The Greeks made use of their female captives as slaves and concubines rather than to mutilate them. The mutilation practice of the Aryans manifested itself in cutting off the breasts, ears and nose of Surpanaka. In Kambar's *The Kamba Ramayanam*, Book 3, Aaranya Kaandam, the lopping of Surpanaka's organs is described graphically in verses 2824 and 2825.

2824

"'நில் அடீஇ' என கடுகினான், பெண் என நினைத்தான்;
வில் எடாது, அவள் வயங்கு எரிஆம் என விரிந்த
சில் வல் ஓதியைச் செங் கையில் திருகுறப் பற்றி,
ஒல்லை ஈர்த்து, உதைத்து, ஒளி கிளர் சுற்று-வாள் உருவி"

2825

"ஊக்கித் தாங்கி, விண்படர்வென்," என்று உருத்து எழுவாளை,
நூக்கி, நொய்தினில், "வெய்து இழையேல்" என நுவலா
மூக்கும், காதும், வெம் முரண் முலைக் கண்களும், முறையால்
போக்கி, போக்கிய சினத்தோடும், புரி குழல்விட்டான்." (Kambar: Aaranya Kaandam, 2001, verses 2824 & 2825).

Sundaram (1991) translates the verses thus:

"Stop!" he shouted and dealing with the woman
Did not take his bow, but clutched in his hand
Her thick flaming hair and twisting it
Gave her a kick and pulled out his dagger" (Book 3, verse 2824).

"I will lift him to the sky," she thought;
But he threw her down with ease
And advising, "Desist from evil,"
Cut off her nose, ears and nipples
And anger gone, let go of her hair" (Book 3, verse 2825).

**Women as Slaves**

Forced labor and sexual exploitation of women are linked to concepts of hierarchy and slavery. Women's misery, as slaves in the Greek world during war as depicted in *The Iliad,* is indescribable. Along with Breisis and Diomeda, Achilles had other women servants to wait on him, and they were probably slaves as well. Nestor

was given the daughter of hearty Arsinous for his superior counsel, when Tenedos fell to Achilles. Odysseus had 50 slaves who assisted Penelope in weaving and in household chores. Fantham, Kampen, Pomeroy and Shapiro (1994) affirm the sad state of affairs of women in the Greek world. "The Homeric poems stress the tragic effects war has on the lives of women and children, who will be forced to become slaves to the victors" (p. 50). When Helen eloped with Paris, she took five serving women, among whom were the two former queens, Aethra, the mother of Theseus who abducted Helen once, and Theisadie, Peirithous's sister ("Helen," *Mortal Women of the Trojan War*). Thus, these slaves adorned the beds of the warriors in times of war and were used for domestic and agricultural tasks of the most menial kinds in times of peace.

Homer also describes the plight of women suffering in war-time through similes. Odysseus wept

> "as a woman weeps her arms flung round her darling husband/a man who fell in battle, fighting for town and townsmen/trying to beat the day of doom from home and children/seeing the man go down, dying, gasping for breath/she clings for dear life, screams and shrills/but the victors , first behind her digging spear-butts in her back and shoulders/drag her off in bondage, yoked to hard labor, pain/and the most heart-breaking torment wastes her cheek" (*Norton Anthology*, 2009, *The Odyssey*, Book VIII, Lines 587-595).

**Bride-Stealing**

Helen of Troy was stolen by Paris and Sita was stolen by Ravana. Chryses, Breisis and Ruma are shown as stolen brides in the epics under study. Barnes (1999) labels McLennan's theories as "disapproved or *Passe,*" but his article on "Marriage By Capture," tests McLennan's hypotheses with sophisticated modern ethnographic accounts which are relevant to his ideas. Barnes (1999) surmises that the modern anthropological discussions are reminiscent in many ways of McLennan's (1876), even unconsciously so. He writes, "Most authors deploy the idea of marriage by capture to explain a variety of local and regional institutions, but as a category characterizing a widespread distribution of apparently comparable institutions, it remains strikingly unstable and unable to elucidate" (Barnes, 1999). However, his approach revolves around testing the theories of McLennan (1876), by scrutinizing the ethnographic contents from Eastern Indonesia, the Caribs, the Vaupes and aboriginal Australian tribes. The following paragraphs elaborate on why bride-stealing is not misogynistic as they seem in the epics, *The Iliad*, and *The Kamba Ramayanam*, and strongly suggest that bride-stealing events we see in those epics are not misogyny, but rather atrocities of war.

**Argument: It is Not Misogyny**

The descriptions of the miseries of women are highlighted in the above incidents, creating a possible misconception that these cruel attitudes were directed only at women. In fact, men received the same treatment in times of war. Children and

other non-combatants were not spared, as the text of *The Iliad* portrays. Innocent children suffered along with their fathers and mothers.

When Menalaus was wounded by Pandarus, Agamemnon tells Menalaus, his brother that "Transgressors will pay the price, a tremendous price, with their heads, their wives and all their children" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book IV, Lines 185- 187). Agamemnon, in his jingoistic speech, declares, "We'll drag their dear wives and helpless children back to the beaked ships, once we've seized their city" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book IV, Lines 274-275). The above-mentioned lines indicate the *Haimon*, (Αἷμων) which means "blood-thirst" of the warriors who would pursue and kill human beings as they would wild animals.

**Androcide and Infanticide**

The blood-thirst of the warrior in the battlefield is a type of behavior which becomes inseparable from the human mode that is mirrored in cruel killing due to personal revenge. Hector killing Patroclaus in Book XVI of *The Iliad*, Achilles killing Hector in Book XXII, and Megas killing Peaerus in Book IV are combat strategies of war, and killing another enemy warrior is a legally accepted act. The following two exemplars are among the abundance of gory details of horrifying descriptions of men dying in war as portrayed by Homer: "The stubborn bronze went in between the man's nose and eye, then tore through his teeth, cut off his tongue at the root, and came out at the base of his chin" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book V, Lines 321-324), and "As Euphorbus' fell back, he plunged his bronze in at the pit of his throat, with faith in his

beefy hand and all his weight behind it, and the point passed clean through Euphorus' soft neck, sending him crashing to earth," (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XVII, Lines 55-58). Another example is "severing both of the sinews," "stretched on the ground with blood still running down from the horrible spear-wound." These descriptions are comparable to the dismembering of Kumbakarnan, the brother of Ravana in *The Kamba Ramayanam*. Yet Homer has a compelling need to elevate the descriptions to minute graphic level to lay stress on the horrors of war as "the great leveler," and to voice his discord about the barbaric act of men killing men.

> "The batch of monkeys swept off their feet,
> by the river came up and saw,
> the carp fish like human eyes
> And holding each other by their tails
> proceeded slowly like blind men
> groping their way with the stick" (Sundaram, 1994, Book 6, verse 7825).

and

> "All the water leaping up in sea
> Shining like blood, different gems
> Appeared to have only one color
> While the pearls from the conches of those from the heads
> Of elephants, both alike looked red" (Sundaram, 1994, Book 6, verse 8355).

Many more details like "wounded, neither walking nor standing, they just crawled on the ground like so many worms," and the flying of severed heads on the battleground resembling gods playing football are some of the repelling depictions from *The Kamba Ramayanam*.

In addition to all the above, Achilles' bloodthirstiness is reflected in his killing of Thersites. In the Aethiopos, a cyclic epic, Alexander (2009) observes: "Achilles kills Thersites after being abused by him and insulted over his alleged love of the Amazon queen" (p. 19). Achilles's contempt of Thersites stems from his objection of Achilles' nefarious act of necrophilia, the act of making love to a corpse. Thus, it is not femicide alone we see in the epics, but events of androcide also. Bloodthirstiness or the ill-treatment is not directed towards women alone. The treatment of Hector's body meted out by Achilles is a classic exemplar to suggest that women were not the only ones like Penthesilea whose dead body suffered; it is Hector's body too in the hands of Achilles that got mutilated. Homer graphically portrays the cruelty Hector's body underwent in the hands of Achilles:

> "He set about foully defiling the body of noble Hector. Piercing behind the tendons of both of his feet between heel and ankle, he pulled through and tied leather thongs, and bound them fast to his chariot, leaving the head to drag. Then lifting the famous armor aboard, he mounted the car himself and lashed the team on, and they unreluctant took off at a gallop. And dust billowed up on either side of the dragging Hector, as his black hair trailed out in the dirt and the once so handsome head was defiled with foul dust" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XXII, Lines 464- 474).

Homer deliberately uses the word “unreluctant” to heighten the impact that Achilles did something even animals hesitate to do.

Children died as a consequence of these wretched wars. Fox (2006) gives historical evidence for the wretchedness of the situation.

> “Women and children were not exempted from the wars in the fourth century Greek world. When their city was taken by siege, their fate was to be killed or sold into slavery. There was no mercy during an invasion for non-combatants, either. In 364 B.C., the Thebans simply enslaved and sold all the women and children whom they captured in little Orchomenus. We can well see why city-states would try to send off their women and children (and livestock) to a place of safety during war. In 431 B.C., the Plataeans evacuated their women, children, and noncombatants to Athens before the siege, and it is so vividly described by Thucydides” (p. 177).

This is the contextual explication for all of the textual suffering of women and children in the epics.

Priam deplores to Hector the way in which his family has been uprooted. He says, “I have seen countless horrors –my sons in the throes of death, my daughters and daughter-in-laws dragged off by loathsome Achaean hands, their marriage chambers wrecked and deported and their babies dashed to the ground in the heat of horrible war” (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XXII, Lines 74-78). Hector tells Andromache that he is

deeply troubled “at the thought of your grief when some bronze-clad Achaean leads you off weeping and puts an end to your freedom. Then, in Argos you’ll weave at the loom of somebody else and carry water for her from the spring Messeis or Hypereia, unwillingly always, but forced to do as you’re told” (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book VI, Lines 500-506). “His fatherless children grieve and the cheeks of his wife are torn in her weeping and wailing” (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XI, Line 448).

**Men as Slaves**

Lacey (1968) observes in his book, *The family in Classical Greece:* “Slaves as property and rather special kind of property; the slave was himself [*sic*] saleable and could thus be valued, but he or she also produced wealth, so that he [*sic*] was valuable from that point of view as well” (p. 137). Phoenicians, the notable maritime traders indulged in stealing people to sell them into slavery. The swineherd of Odysseus, Eumaeus was kidnapped by his Phoenician nursemaid and sold to Odysseus’ father. She herself was stolen by his Phoenician traders. The story narrated by Eumaeus conveys the importance of slavery as a moneymaking venture in a plundering society. Slavery, the ownership of other human beings was a way of Greek life, as Fox (2006) narrates in his book, *The Classical World: An Epic History from Homer to Hadrian.* Thus, slavery is not exclusively aimed at women at the time of the Trojan War.

So, the question is whether bride-stealing is misogyny or simply treating women as a source of labor, sexual satisfaction or even social status.

**Not Misogyny, but the Atrocities of War**

War between staunch Aetolians and Curetes is described in Rees (2005):

> "But when the Curates
> were scaling the walls, firing the city, and raining
> Their missiles down hard on the room of Prince Meleager.
> At last his fair-belted wife came to him in tears
> And vividly pictured for him the horrors that people
> Suffer when enemies take their town, reminding
> Him of the men all slaughtered, of the city reduced
> To ashes, of children and fair-belted women dragged off
> By the foe" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book IX, Lines 674-684).

The atrocities of war are inscribed in Herodotus' History. He writes, "In peace, sons bury fathers, in war, fathers bury sons" (Herodotus, Histories, 1.87). Men at war die leaving behind their fathers, mothers, wives and children. With no ethical codes for the conduct of war, concentrating only on violence, atrocities were committed in the wars fought in the epics. Along with spears, lances and other weaponry, stones were also enlisted. Hera calls out to Poseidon and Athena to help Achilles in his fight when Aeneas picks up a big stone to hit Achilles, Poseidon interferes and stops. Hector also gets hit by a stone. The monkeys, allies of Rama and Lakshmana, use boulders and heavy trees to fight the war against Ravana's army. Graves (2002) confirms that the story should not be misconstrued as myth, as these are realities of ancient Greek history.

> "The cold-blooded treatment of women, suppliants, and allies serves as a reminder that the *Iliad* is not Bronze Age myth. With the fall of Cnossus,… a new Iron Age morality emerges: A petty Zeus who acknowledges no divine restraint. Iphigenia's sacrifice, Odysseus's hateful revenge on Palamedes, the selling of Lycaon for a silver cup, Achilles's shameful pursuit of Troilus and the forced concubinage of Breisis and Chryseis are typical of barbarous saga" (p. 601).

According to the *Norton Anthology* (2009, p. 161), "Sometime in the last century of the millennium the great palaces were destroyed by fire. With them disappeared not only the arts and skills that had created Mycenaean wealth but even the system of writing." However, contrary to the assumption that the great palaces were destroyed by fire, there is an alternate possibility that they were destroyed by the enemies who did not appreciate the work of their conquered. The invaders destroyed all that the conquered had, and whatever they could not carry, they burnt. The Semitic invaders of Indo-European stock were Akkadians, and the cuneiform tables dug out from the excavations at Tepe Yaha give evidence as to how the rich Elamite capital Susa was sacked by Assurbanipal, the Assyrian king just as the wealthy Troy was plundered by the Achaeans. It also shows how fierce the Assyrians were in eradicating their enemies. According to Damrosch (2006) Assurbanipal dismembered the enemies' flesh and fed "to the dogs, swine, wolves, and eagles, to the birds of heaven and the fish of the deep." Damrosch (2006) adds that resolving to remove Elam as a threat forever,

> Assurbanipal "invaded in 647, the year after he finally subdued Babylon. He pressed his attack further in 646, and finally overran the capital, Susa, in 645. He then hung the severed head around the neck of the man's surviving brother. Not content with destroying the current generation, he attacked their ancestors as well. 'The sepulchers of their earlier and later kings… I destroyed, I devastated, I exposed to the sight of Shamash. Their bones I carried off to Assyria. I laid restlessness upon their shades.' Still unsatisfied, he vented his fury on the Elamites' gods, leveling their temples and desecrating their sacred precincts, 'reducing their gods and goddesses to phantoms.' Finally, he attacked the land itself, sowing it with salt and thorns, so that nothing should ever grow there again" (p. 190).

The aggressors destroyed all that the previous society had possessed. The victors exerted their ways of life onto their subjects, and enforced their culture and language. The cruelties inflicted by the invaders of Minoan culture made the latter lose their language, and it ultimately totally transformed the Minoan into the Mycenaean culture. The cruelty inflicted by the Dorians on the Mycenaeans dragged the Greek societies into the Dark Ages. *Norton Anthology* (2009) confirms this: "For the next few hundred years the Greeks were illiterate and so no written evidence survives for what, in view of our ignorance about so many aspects of it, we call the Dark Ages of Greece" (p. 161). Sanskrit suffered a similar fate in India after the invasions of the Aryans and

other tribes, which serves as a paradigm to enlighten us on the reasons for the Dark Ages. Sanskrit also died and, for a few hundred years, people of North India had no properly communicable language, so that Hindi, a simplified form of Sanskrit, was later created as a day-to-day language in North India.

Ultimately, these war atrocities are compelling reminders of a violent culture with unchanging patterns of cruelty and brutality. The hatred of these men was not exclusively towards women alone, but part of an innate nature to be aggressive towards anybody. Bride-stealing is simply one of the war atrocities that were common among these people.

**Commonality between Cattle-Stealing and Bride-Stealing**

Cattle-stealing was one of the major strategies followed in ancient times to incite an enemy to war. Describing the Homeric world, Lintott (1982) comments: "Plundering by land was as common as piracy, cattle rustling in particular being an accepted form of adventure then, as more recently" (p. 17). He concludes that cattle-raiding was a recognized form of border warfare between whole communities. Herds of cattle, being the wealth of the ancient people, were targeted to invite the enemy to fight. Intriguingly, Achilles also referred to this kind of scheme in *The Iliad,* Book I referring to the Trojans: "They've never done me any harm, never rustled my cattle or horses, or plundered in fertile Phthis a harvest of mine" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book I, Lines 175- 178). Nestor talks of "the rustling of the cattle" and "taking cattle in Elis"

(Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XI, Lines 756-757). Hence, cattle raiding must have been a widely-adopted practice in ancient times, as it appears in both Aryan and Tamil customs.

Tolkappiyanar, the Aristotle of the Tamils, who 'imported' the Aryan culture to South India, wrote a book called *Tholkaapiyam*, in which he refers to a strategy in war called "*vetci*." As per that strategy, Dhakshinamoorthy (2005) notes that the soldiers enter the territory of their enemy and smuggle his/her cattle, with the intention of both plundering and inciting the enemy to go to war with them (p. 36). Iyengar (2001) clarifies the misconceptions of one of the clans of *Dasyus* or the Dravidians, Pani who are mistakenly attributed the qualities of being demons "who stole clouds and prevented rainfall" (p. 28). It is a common trait of the Aryans to describe their enemies as demons or monsters. Iyengar (2001) further informs us: "The Panis were a tribe rich in cattle which they kept in caves; and they were enemies of certain Aryas and these two began war with each other by the time-honoured method of lifting cattle" (p. 28). The same is mentioned as *nirai kavardhal*, meaning cattle-stealing *(nirai*-cattle, and *kavardhal*-stealing) in N.C. Kandaiah (2002), the Tamil historian's book. He calls it *Vetchi Thinai* (p. 78).

Iyengar (2001) explicates how the name "*vetci*" originated for cattle-lifting. The subjects of war-poetry on the conditions of the terrain of *Kurinji,* the hilly country, are called vetci, besides love. "Wars in the Kurinji consisted merely in the lifting of called (Vetci), so-called because the raiders wore a garland of vetci flowers; and their recovery from the depredators (Karandai), named for a similar reason" (p. 28). Thus, wearing

flowers during the wars to denote a war strategy is common among the Tamils. "*Vetri vaahai soodinan*," is an oft-quoted line in Tamil literature, and it simply means that somebody was successful in a venture. But, *vaahai* is the name of the flower the victorious warrior wore to announce their victory. Hence, the cattle-stealing is simply a strategy of war. Therefore, women also become an element of commerce equivalent to the movable property of the wealth of flocks.

In the same way, in Greek culture, a woman is identified as cattle in her procreation function. Vernant (1983), writing about *Myth, Feminism and Religion*, in his book, *Myth and Thought among Greeks*, mentions the oldest forms of marriage in Greece.

> "In its oldest form ….marriage is a formalized transaction between family groups and the woman is one element of exchange. … Like a ransom, she may be the means of bringing a vendetta to an end. … Among the gifts exchanged as a normal accompaniment to the marriage and which set the seal on the new agreement there is one particular value because it is explicitly given in exchange for a woman, and is in fact the price paid for her. This is the "*ethna*", a very valuable commodity of a very definite type: prize animals from the flocks and herds, especially male cattle, of size and number are made" (p. 139).

"Bride price," "dowry," and rich betrothal gifts are mentioned six times in *The Iliad*: in Book IX: Line 168, in Book IX: Line 169 and 326, in Book XIII: Lines 417 and 439, and in

Book XIII: Line 417. Also, in Book XXII, Priam tells Achilles of the dowry he obtained from the princess Laothoe, the mother of his sons Lycaon and Polydorus. Additionally, we find mention of bride price in the following verses in *The Iliad.* Borus gave "gifts of wooing past counting and publicly married the girl" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XVI, Line 207). Echecles gave innumerable gifts of wooing. He married Polymele, a dancer who bore a child for Hermes, but married Echecles. The child stayed with the grandfather Phylas. Cisseus, Theono's father gave one of his daughters, "the girl for whom he had given so much," (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XI, Line 271) to the groom, but he died in war. Theono's husband Antenor and their other son Iphidamas was promised a hundred head of fine cattle with a promise of thousand sheep and goats to come. Mother of Gorgythion, Priam's wife Castianeira came from Aesyme to be married to Priam with a huge dowry. Agamemnon offers any one of his daughters, Chrysothemis, Laodice and Iphianassa to Achilles to marry and, Agamemnon will honor him with gifts, generous ones, more than anyone has ever given with his daughter. He promises to give him seven prosperous towns: Cardamyle, Enope, Hire, Pherae, Antheia, Aepeia and Pedasus as it is mentioned in *The Iliad,* Book IX.

Bride price is the economic compensation given to the bride's parents by the bridegroom for the economic gain otherwise gained through the bride. A dowry is a transaction between the families of proposed marriage alliance, mostly given by the bride's family to the groom for her maintenance for the rest of her life. Goody and Tambiah (1973), viewing it with cross-cultural perspective, has this to say: "Bride wealth

and dowry have different potentialities in the way they can link up with the politico-economic institutions of the society where they are found" (p. 64). Weber's view on legalized marriages is intriguing, as it is believed that legally regulated marriages are basically an economic transaction among peoples. Interestingly, the praxis of offering bride price is seen among many cultures of the world. The word "bride price" comes in, *The Iliad*, six times in different occasions. In book XIII, Othryoneus, a man who lived in Cabesus, asks for Priam's lovely daughter Cassandra with no bride price offering, but Othryonous promised a mighty work of battle (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XIII, Lines 422-26).

Vernant (1983) adds: "By this marriage practice of purchase the woman becomes one of the commodities of the exchange. Being in the mobile in the same ways as other commodities, she is similarly the medium for gifts" (p. 139). Therefore, giving away women is a political strategy for the Greeks and also for the Aryans, both of whom are from Indo-European origins. In *The Iliad,* we see Achilles claiming Breisis thus: "Breisis, my gift from the sons of Achaeans" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book I, Line 460). Breisis was given away as booty to Achilles and Hecamede, "daughter of heart Arsinous," was given to Nestor in times of war; in Aryan customs, however, virgins were given away to the priests as awards for conducting the marriage.

1208

"கோது அறு தவத்துத் தம் குலத்துளோர் தொழும்
ஆதி அம் சோதியை அடி வணங்கினான்.
காது இயல்,கயல் விழிக் கன்னிமார்களை,

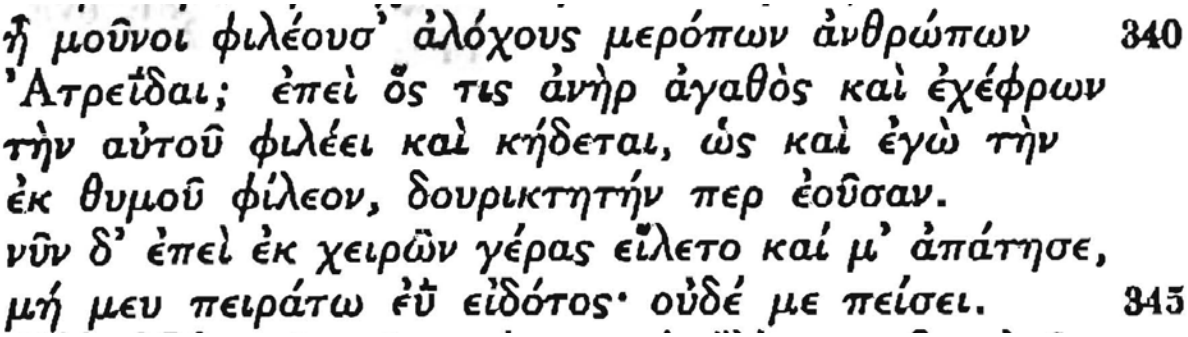
> வேதியர்க்குஅரு மறை விதியின் நல்கியே." (Kambar, 2001, Bala kandam, verse 1208).

The above Tamil verse transliterates as this: Just before his marriage, Rama worshipped the primal splendor or the sun his predecessors worshipped and gave away the virgins (whose carp like eyes reached their ears) who had long eyes to the priests, according to their tradition.

Levi-Strauss (1969) called the exchange of women as "the essence of humanity," and according to him, "For the woman herself is nothing other than one of these gifts, the supreme gift among those that can only be obtained in the form of reciprocal gifts" (p. 65). Levi-Strauss (1969) stressed that the phenomenon of women, becoming an economic basis, creates and sustains kinship. The economic value a woman carried became political when she was made a pawn in a political game, as illustrated in the "kidnapping" of Helen of Troy. However, study indicates that, in Homeric times, women were not the only pawns in the political game.

Though Achilles expressed his love for Breisis thus: "Can it be that of all mortal men, only the sons of Atreus love their wives? Not so, for any real man of good sense both loves and cares for his own, as I loved her with all of my heart, though she was won by my spear" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book IX, Lines 384-388). Murry's (1924) translation

goes like this:


ἦ μοῦνοι φιλέουσ' ἀλόχους μερόπων ἀνθρώπων 340
Ἀτρεΐδαι; ἐπεὶ ὅς τις ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἐχέφρων
τὴν αὐτοῦ φιλέει καὶ κήδεται, ὡς καὶ ἐγὼ τὴν
ἐκ θυμοῦ φίλεον, δουρικτητήν περ ἐοῦσαν.
νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ἐκ χειρῶν γέρας εἵλετο καί μ' ἀπάτησε,
μή μευ πειράτω ἐὺ εἰδότος· οὐδέ με πείσει. 345

(Book IX, p. 406).

Achilles readily slept with the pretty Diomeda, daughter of Phorbas, “one whom he had brought from Lesbos” (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book IX, Line 770), after Breisis was taken away by Agememnon.

While the Helenic attitudes of men echo marginalization of women or use them as objects devoid of any emotions, Ravana’s attitude towards his abducted victim, Sita, is interesting, as he did not lay his hands on her in her year-long stay at Asoka Vanam where she was imprisoned. Ravana’s lands are plentiful and people are well fed. Intriguingly, nature and the derived culture that stems from either marginally arable land or plentiful land appear to contribute to whether women are treated with cruelty or benevolence. Aryans and Achaeans who are portrayed in the epics are from marginal lands, and one of their occupations is to plunder. Women have been brought from the domestic arena into the public arena as pawns, but in times of war, (with no ethics or social constraints) women, like men, suffered in the ancient world that the epics portray.

The Proto-Elamite culture, (or Dravidian culture) from which Ravana came, did not permit him to rape Sita, which he could have under the circumstances. Therefore, it is culture that stemmed from nature that played a pivotal part in the way in which Dravidian men treated women.

After the assimilation of Achean and Minoan cultures, (which became the Mycenean culture) women were under the strict control of their male relatives and husbands from birth to death. They were the most valuable prizes of raids and war, not only because of their intrinsic value as workers and concubines, and also, as goods to be bartered or given away, but because capturing an enemy's mother, wife, daughter, or sister was the ultimate insult (Pomeroy et al., 1999, p. 62).

In ancient Greek epics, raiding and ransoming go hand-in-hand. Chryses, the priest of Apollo, had to pay a ransom to liberate his daughter, Chryseis. Andromache's mother was taken as a slave in the sacred city of Eetion and released for a "priceless ransom." However, ransom was not limited to women alone. One of Priam's sons, Lycaon, was captured by Achilles, then sent by ship to "well-settled Lemnos and gotten a price for him from the son of Jason." From there, he was sold again and ransomed by Eetion of Imbros for "a much greater price," and sent to Arisbe from where he escaped and reached his father's home. But, on the twelfth day after his return, Achilles accosted him in the battle and killed him (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book XXI, Lines 43-56). Hence, this is indicative and evidential of the fact that capture is not a gender issue, or

an act of misogyny, but simply the practice of the times. Therefore, bride-stealing becomes one of the strategies of “lawless” war.

## Chapter 4: Historical Implications and Explications of the Wars in Epics

### Historical Accounts

Both *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam* belong to the genre of war poetry, and they tell of events which supposedly occurred thousands of years ago. As *Norton Anthology: World Literature* (2009) notes, "In the last hundred years archaeology has given us a clearer picture than our forebears had of the level of civilization in early Greece….The stories told in the Homeric poems are set in the age of the Trojan War, which archaeologists date to the twelfth century B.C.E…. and they preserve some faded memories of the Mycenaean Age" (pp. 161-162). Comparatively, Valmiki's *Ramayana* is the Sanskrit epic, also war poetry like *The Iliad,* which describes the war between two ethnicities, the Aryans and the Dravidians. In Sanskrit, *Maha Kaavya* and *Itihas* are the terms used for the epics. While the former means *Maha+ Kaavya* "large tales," the latter denotes "that which occurred." *Adhi* means ancient, and hence it is an ancient large narrative. "Chronicle" means history (*Itihas)*, thus making *adhikavya* ancient history. Van Nooten (Oinas, 1978, p. 51) affirms that, among Hindus, its historicity of the epics is not even a point of dispute as Rama is, still today, celebrated as a reincarnation of Vishnu, one of the trinities of Hinduism. The classical epics are the first in India to utilize their scripture *Rig Veda* as the repositories of what happened in Aryan's struggle with the natives of the land. Thus, the historical events utilized as the predominating themes of the epic are recorded with intent to celebrate the victories of Mycenaean culture over Trojan culture in The Iliad, and the victory of the Aryan culture

over the Dravidian culture. Consequently, the bride-stealing events which are depicted in the epics must have happened as historical events.

**Unreliability of Historical Narrations**

An historical element or a phenomenon, in the course of time, may come to be seen as a contentious one, whose moral, social, and political assumptions can be questioned. The variety of ways in which it can change due to interpretations, criticism, elaboration, and transformation leads to the unreliability of narrations over many centuries. A story or an event, which was once widely narrated for one prominent reason, has a capacity to transform due to changing social contexts and new episodes may be interpolated or new constructs may be put upon action and motive. "Epic poems grew out of appropriate cultural conditions, the so-called Heroic Age bridging nomadic and sedentary stages of civilization" (Oinas, 1978, p. 1). The tonality of the oral epic poems is different from that of literary epics: the former were composed for nomadic, preliterate people, and the latter were written down for literate societies.

The author holds the key to change the face of the situation or a character depending on the mood of the society. The very title of Hughes (2005)*, Helen of Troy: Goddess, Princess, Whore*, bears evidence to the Rashomon effect it entails. In *The Iliad*, Helen is a willing partner to the act of abduction, though not without remorse, and in Euripides' *Helen*, but in the face of somewhat differing situations, Helen languishes in Egypt for ten years as a victim of Hera when the war was raging in Troy. The willing partner becomes a whore, the abduction makes her a princess, and her image of God

brings in a phantom. The same action of abduction, thus, encompasses a connotatively differing justification of a Phantom theory. Valmiki's *Ramayana* (4 B.C.) was the primary epic written in Sanskrit which stemmed from nomadic stages of the Indo-Aryans whose ways of life permitted Ravana to abduct Sita by pulling her hair, hugging her and placing her on his lap. But when Thulasi Das' (16 A.D.) wrote his version of Ramayana, he treated the same storyline creating a phantom which went through the ordeal of abduction and Sati. When Kambar wrote *The Kamba Ramayanam*, he treated Sita as his God's consort, and changed the treatment of abduction with the Tamilian concept of *Karpu* (Chastity) in mind, and Ravana takes Sita along with the hut she lived in, without even laying a finger on her, thus treating the same event, twisting it to suit his creativity and conviction.

Sometimes, literary contents run rife with descriptions and narrations typified as magical realism to justify the content of the author's narration, depending on the time period in which they lived and the ramifications of their culture. Kambar intentionally infuses the values of Tamil culture into his Aryan hero's spouse to highlight his pride in those values to his readers. While Rama is hailed as a hero in Valmiki's *Ramayana*, Kambar elevates Rama as a reincarnation of Vishnu, and as P.S. Sundaram (1989) claims "Kamban is noted for his exaggeration and this last may well scandalize the orthodox reader to whom Rama is God, as nothing short of blasphemy" (Intro P. 7). While Valmiki wrote in a preliterate age, Thulasi Das and Kambar wrote for people of later stages of development of Tamil civilization. However, the different narrations leave

contextual assumptions which question the authenticity of the historical event itself. The interdisciplinary approach offers a better understanding of the wars portrayed in the epics.

The new historicist approach in literary criticism has encouraged analytical interplay of social, medical, legal, and political documents alongside literary texts. Among them, political history of ancient India and ancient Greece are the ones that opened up the venue for understanding the text in its context. Further, anthropology expounded the historical patterns of the migration of an ethnic group and culls out the similarities between the ancient and extant groups in spite of internal conversions resultant from migration, aggression, and evolution. Thus, the interdisciplinary study opened up a new worldview to show the link between the ancestral connection of the peoples of ancient Greece and ancient India which is evident from the textual and contextual comparative literary study of *The Kamba Ramayanam* and *The Iliad,* the epics under study. The combined study of various disciplines unfolds the historical truth about the traditional, social, and cultural integration that occurred in both ancient Greece and the pre-Aryan or a Proto-Elamite culture of ancient India. A retrospective look at conceptualizing the ancient practice of bride-stealing in terms of the impacts on and ramifications of the political and social orders in cross-cultural perspective throws light on the major transformations of power from a matrilineal egalitarian to a patriarchal ranked system in the late Bronze Age. The women we see in the epics were caught in the crossfire and suffered in the hands of the proponents of patriarchy.

Valmiki's Ramayana on which *The Kamba Ramayanam* was based and *The Iliad* are basically from the oral tradition, and the reliability of these contextual assumptions have been examined historically as well as anthropologically. The historical accounts clarify that the plundering way of life presented in *The Iliad* represents the chaotic turbulence resulting from the incursions of nomads on to the sedentary cultures. As Hanson puts it, " If there was a combined expedition against Troy, we may speculate that the attackers' motive was not the retrieval of a woman, however attractive she might have been; nor was it a business-like desire to control the entrance to the Dardanelles, since no victors stayed to occupy the site. Possibly, they went to plunder" (Oinas, 1978, p. 11). In the same vein, Rama's genuine aim of war was to conquer lands and not to overcome evils. As Iyengar (2001) states, "The general run of the story of the *Ramayana* has the implication that all India south of the Godavari was under the sway of Ravana" (p. 53). Thus, not surprisingly, the kernel of truth that Vansina (1965) mentions, is inverted and distorted in power-driven group of people demonstrated as world-savers. However, oral tradition is a primary contributor to the deepest understanding of human experience relating to ancient people which can be meaningfully evaluated.

Van Nooten admitted that "The *Ramayana*'s mythology has not been studied very well yet" (Oinas, 1978, p. 62). *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are hailed as scriptures of Hinduism and the philosophical impact of these scriptures leaves ontological twists. It has been established well in the minds of western readers that

Rama was the reincarnation of Vishnu and an embodiment of virtues. However, historical evidence indicates that it was Rama's colonizing efforts that resulted in war. This misreading of the text contributes to misunderstanding of the text. Without the contextual explications, it is not possible to understand mythology or the embedded motives of the author. The undistorted history has a key to understanding the textual events along with their contexts. Hence, historical implications and explications are vital in understanding a text. The contexts of the texts studied in connection with the culture in which they took place shed light on the events of the epics (especially bride-stealing); a culture emanates from its physical surroundings. Therefore, to trace the growth of human culture, one needs to turn to geographical as well as historical causes.

The earliest urban, complex civilizations emerged sometime around 3500 B.C. in the fertile lands of the greater Near East (i.e., the Fertile Crescent). While historical development was taking shape in the Fertile Crescent, people remained immersed in the hunter-gatherer or simple farming lifestyle in marginally productive areas. The reason attributed to the "advancement" of culture, according to Burns, McNall, Lerner and Meacham (1984), is the climatic theory discussed by Aristotle, Montesquieu, and the American geographer Ellsworth Huntington (p. 3). This theory explicates climatic conditions as the propellant for the formation of advanced cultures. Although now largely discredited, Huntington's (1924) theory that climatic stimulus led to the highest cultural development had previously enjoyed great influence (p. 4). According to this theory, the Nile, was responsible for the earliest rise of Egyptian civilization during the

period between 3500 and 2500 B.C. Mesopotamia (Μεσοποταμία), the fertile land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, also developed irrigation and large-scale farming in the period between 3500 and 2500 B.C. When the climate was conducive to agriculture, the rivers with transportation facilities encouraged trade which, in turn, helped to stimulate cultural advancement with diffusion. Similarly, the Indus river region was the generator for the rise of the Indus Valley Civilization in 2500 B.C. The geographical location of Crete, a Mediterranean island, helped the Minoan civilization to become a maritime trading power between 2050 and 2000 B.C.

Huntington (1924) also claimed that some parts of the earth's surface could never give rise to a superior (sociopolitically complex) culture (p. 242). The Paleolithic hunter-gatherer societies in marginal regions, such as the deserts and closed forests, were often isolated from "advanced" cultures due to their remoteness. The incursions of tribal chiefdoms onto advanced cultures for their land and possessions began with the arrival of agriculture. As farming communities became more specialized, as Woolfe (2008) states, "they also became wealthier as people acquired material possessions on a scale beyond anything conceivable in a hunter-gatherer society" (pp. 6-17). Woolfe (2008) points out that "It is likely that from time to time, other tribes would have wished to lay claim to these possessions and territory, and this must have led to raids and skirmishes" (p. 19).

Similarly, Iyengar (2001) highlights the occupations of the desert dwellers in his *History of the Tamils*. Describing the marginality of the region of the *Palai* or desert, he writes:

> "The Palai, the dry sand desert, can scarcely be considered as one of the habitable regions of the earth's surface… But the call of the desert finds an echo in the bosoms of those who are born with a love of adventure, and wander-lust is the main motive power that inspires the lives of many men who possess strong sinews and a stout heart" (p. 8).

He compares them to the elephant, the strong animal par excellence and also to the shark, a predator. These people took to the profession of soldiering and of preying on the rich. When the foresters dwelled on hunting, coastal people made their livelihoods on fishing, and the mountain people lived on making honey and millet; but the people of Palai earned their living by plundering the others.

The first known agricultural Mesopotamian civilization was in constant conflict with tribal peoples. Its history witnessed numerous inter-state and inter-city rivalries and attacks from various invaders. Woolfe (2008) notes that "Peoples such as the Kassites and Amorites from neighboring regions were attracted by the wealth of Mesopotamia and the land, with its undefendable frontiers, was frequently attacked" (p. 24). In the same vein, the Minoan culture, an urban culture in which women enjoyed tremendous freedom due to their husbands' seafaring ventures, was toppled by invaders called Indo-Europeans.

**Assimilation Process of the Minoan Culture into Mycenaean Culture**

In the first half of the second millennium B.C., Crete was by far the most civilized region in the Aegean area. As Martin (1996) puts it, "The Minoans did not speak Greek, had grown rich through complex agriculture and seaborne trade with the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt" (p. 17). The arrival of proto-Greeks in Greece in the years around 2000 B.C. put an end to the Minoan civilization. Burns et al. (1984) confirmed that "The civilization that resulted from the fusion of Greek and Minoan elements is usually called Mycenaean" (p. 94). Martin (1996) took a historical look at these groups of people who migrated into prehistoric Europe and radically changed the nature of the society already in place; this would have included the indigenous inhabitants of Greece. According to his hypothesis, the widespread movement of people who caused devastation across Europe around 2000 B.C. would have caused the Trojan War (p. 17). Martin's (1996) assumption is the same as that of the archaeologists, i.e., that the Trojan War (if it happened at all) must have occurred in the 1200 B.C. (p. 17). As Lintott (1982) outlined, the Bronze Age is an age of violence from whose effects humanity has not yet recovered, and it "took a long time for Greece to be peaceful, secure and free from upheavals" (p. 14). Lintott (1982) presented Thucydides' view on the long period of lawlessness, "Thucydides used the nature of society in one of the less developed parts of Greece in his own day, the northwest region – where brigandage and piracy were a respected way of life until centuries later" (p. 14).

Martin (1996) states that

> "The Minoans passed on this tradition of intercultural contact to the civilization of the Mycenaeans, whom they greatly influenced before losing their power after the middle of the millennium. The centers of Mycenaean civilization were destroyed in the period from about 1200 to 1000 B.C., as part of widespread turmoil throughout the eastern Mediterranean region" (p. 17).

Burns et al. (1984) further claim that "Around 1200 B.C., and 1100 B.C., the culture succumbed to the Dorians-barbaric northern Greeks who had iron weapons" (p. 95). Thus Mycenaean culture was destroyed by the Dorian invasion which plunged the whole Greek peninsula into the Dark Ages. Therefore, the Trojan War must have occurred before the Dorian invasion and after the invasion of Indo-European people. As mentioned before, the *Norton Anthology of World Literature* (2009) surmises thus: "The stories told in the Homeric poems are set in the age of the Trojan war," and "do preserve some faded memories of the Mycenaean Age" (p. 162). The inefficient king Agamemnon who led the Trojan War was the ruler of Mycenae. According to Martin (1996), "The Greeks of the historical period are seen as the descendants of this violent group of invaders" (p. 17). This suggests that the Mycenaeans of *The Iliad* were these violent groups of invaders.

The Aryan-Dravidian war that is central to *The Kamba Ramayanam* is resultant of incursions of nomads onto the Indus Valley Civilization. Indus Valley civilization may be the consequence of diffusion of elements of Sumerian civilization due to expansion and interstate rivalries. Between 3000 and 2334 B.C., intercity rivalry was pronounced in Sumeria. The Elamites who originated from the Zagros Mountain range of Iran controlled the city of Ur in c. 2400 B.C. Burney (1977) says, "The individuality of Elamite civilization is shown by the development from the slightly earlier Uruk pictographic script of the Proto-Elamite script during a phase equivalent to the Jemset Nasr period of Southern Mesopotamia" (p. 146) which is generally dated between 3100 and 2900 B.C. It is substantiated by the historian Woolfe (2008) that "The historical migration of the people, the Elamites, who originated from Zagros Mountains to the east of Iran controlled the Sumerian culture in c. 2450, can be traced to ascertain the spread of Elamites into Indus valley civilization. After a brief period of 50 years of rule, they were overthrown by the city of Lagash under King Eannatum" (p. 23).

The persecution harried by their conquerors impelled them to flee the land, and they trickled down to the Indus valley, lured by the lush alluvial soil of the Indus River. Mcintosh (2002) observes that "An intriguing additional piece of information is that a linguistic link has been demonstrated between the Dravidian languages and the Elamite language of early western Iran" (p. 154). She also suggests that the link of the Dravidians' language with the Elamites might involve the movement of people who spoke a Proto-Elamo-Dravidian language from the Near East into the Indo-Iranian

border area and eventually into the Indus valley, slowly spreading into the whole continent of India, including Sri Lanka. It is noteworthy that Elam is the ancient name for Sri Lanka, the abode of Ravana, the antagonist of *The Kamba Ramayanam*. The war depicted in the epic echoes the wars between the Aryans and the Dravidians. Ravana's grandmother Tataka, his cousin Karan, and his sister Surpanaka were the previous rulers who were killed by Rama and his brother with intent to grapple the land from them. The brutal war depicted in *The Kamba Ramayanam* is due to the effect of encroaching activity of the invaders.

Raiding and a plundering way of life were common activities in Homeric society of ancient Greece. Pomeroy et al. (1999) elucidate how the *basileis* (local chiefs) with their *herairoi* (companions) conducted raiding expeditions (p. 56). Achilles himself defines raiding thus: "For raiding can get a man [*sic*] cattle and splendid fat sheep, and barter can get him tripods and sorrel horses" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book IX, Lines 467-469). Taking tips from Dolon, the Trojan spy, Diomedes and Odysseus steal the horses of the Trojan ally King Rhesus. Thus, the ancient Greek life Homer demonstrates includes continual robbing. This society is glorified as a heroic age, and is justified as a bringer of glory, Kleos (κλέος). Alexander's (2009) statement confirms this:

> "That glory , honor, and fame are more important than life is a heroic convention so old it can be traced securely to Indo-European tradition; integral to this heroic view is the belief that glory- *Kleos*- is achieved through heroic poetry, in other words, through epic"(p. 98).

This view is supported by the historians Pomeroy et al. (1999) that “Booty raids not only enrich the raid-leader and his men, but also serve as a test of their manliness, skill and courage, and thus bring honor and glory” (p. 56). Pomeroy et al. (1999) not only elucidate how these raiding events are formulated and performed, but also point out the raiding expedition of Odysseus mentioned in *The Odyssey*, as a classic exemplar. The bloody spoils of a dead enemy equates treating women brought home from enemy quarters as concubines and slaves, and it is an acceptable act of valor. Achilles tells his mother about the raid of Thebe. “We went to Thebe, the sacred City of Eetion, destroyed and plundered it all, and brought the booty back here” (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book I, Lines 425-427). Fortifications were constructed, such as the Scaean Wall in Troy mentioned in *The Iliad*, and the fortification in the Phaeacian city “ringed by walls and strong high towers too” (*Norton Anthology*, 2009, *The Odyssey*, Book VI, Lines 288-289) in *The Odyssey.* They were constructed as preventive measures to avoid the brutal attacks of nomadic people as well as other city-states.

Similarly, the Aryans, who invaded and subdued the Dravidians or the Elamites, were nomads and illiterates. They refined their original language from one of the ethnicities called the Nagars who are mentioned in *The Kamba Ramayanam*, and, hence, their version of Sanskrit language script is called. Panini, a northwest Indian, was the grammarian of Sanskrit language. Basham (1956) states that “With Panini the language had virtually reached its classical form” (p. 388). Because of their fairer skin, they claimed themselves to be godly people or *devas*, as opposed to the Dravidians who

were tawny. They called themselves “nobles” and “gods”. They called the Dravidians *dasyus,* dark-skinned people or slaves. The Aryan scripture *The Rig Veda* talks about the Aryans as the conquerors of *daysus* who lived in *pura* or *puram*, which means walled cities. The *Vedas* refer to pre-Aryan culture as *Dasyu* culture. The Dasyus held on to their nonviolent beliefs which they brought with them when they subsequently moved to South India. Iyengar (2001) writes:

> “When the *Rsis* speak of the *Dasyus*, we should remember that they speak of their enemies, and hence we should make allowance for exaggeration due to animosity. We should also not forget that both in the V*edic* mantras and in the Epic and Puranic legends, side-by-side with denunciations of the savagery [*sic*] of the *Dasyus* and *Rakshasas*, there are innumerable passages referring to their high civilization, their castles, their gold ornaments, their wealth, etc. Hence, they were not barbarous aborigines waiting to be civilized by Aryan exiles or stray Aryan immigrants.” (p. 32).

Wolpert (1982) writes, “The monumental excavation of the ancient Punjab city of Harappa (Hara is one of Shiva’s names), begun in 1921, and its mighty reflection south along the Indus at Mohenjo-daro (‘Mound of the Dead’), started a year later, have transformed our historical understanding of ancient India” (p. 14). He continues that the discovery of these two cities served to extend the roots of urban Indian civilization back at least 1000 years before the Aryan invasions. He continues:

> "The archeological remains at these sites also emphatically reversed the relative cultural status of India's Aryan conquerors and her pre-Aryan peoples. The pre-Aryan *dasas, or* 'slaves,' whose darker skins differentiated them from Aryan 'color', were suddenly revealed as more advanced, sophisticated, and technologically precocious than the semi-barbaric hoard of Aryan invaders from the west, whose only 'civilized' advantages seem to have been some superior weaponry and the use of harnessed horses" (p. 14).

Comparing the events narrated in the epics show that the people who attacked the Trojans and the Dravidians are the same people who are collectively called Indo-Europeans. Deep scrutiny of the patterns of war discloses that their aim is to loot what others have. Their preferences are war and not peace.

**Migratory Pattern of Proto-Greeks and Indo-Aryans**

Wolpert (1982) stated:

> "Around 2000 B.C., the original Indo-European-speaking, semi-nomadic barbarians, [*sic*] who most probably lived in the region between the Caspian and the Black seas, were driven from their homeland by some natural disaster, possibly draught, prolonged frost, or plague. Whatever the cause of their dispersion- it may have been a series of Mongol invasions from Central Asia- the ancestors of the italic, Greek-Germanic, English-, Celtic-, Iranian-, Sanskriti and modern Hindi-speaking peoples

> were forced to flee from what is today southern Russia to survive. These tribes moved in every direction, splitting up into smaller, more cohesive units, driving their herds of cattle, sheep, goats, and domesticated horses with them, and opening a new chapter in the history of Europe, as well as of India. The Hittites were the first Indo-Europeans to settle in a new homeland, for we find traces of them just south of Caucasia in Cappadocia that date from approximately 2000 B.C. Other tribes pushed on, however, some to the west, across Anatolia, and some to the east, across Persia (Now named Iran, a cognate of Aryan, for the Indo-Iranian language brought by Indo-Iranians to that region between 1800 and 1500 B.C.). The Indo-Iranians seem to have lived for some time in harmony following their long migration. By about 1500 B.C., however, they appear to have split once more, and pastoral tribes known to history as the Indo-Aryans, or simply Aryans, advanced still further east, across the perilous Hindu Kush Mountains, into India" (p. 24).

The Aryans, after occupying the fertile region of the Ganga basin, aimed at the Godhavari fertile basin in the South. The war that ensued with the rulers of South India is the theme of *The Kamba Ramayanam.*

Eliade (1981), the anthropologist and historian of religion, noted that the members of the Indo-European military confraternities (*Mannerbunde*) and the nomadic Turko-Mongol horsemen of Central Asia behaved toward the sedentary populations that

they attacked like “carnivores,” hunting, strangling, and devouring the steppe or the farmers’ cattle (p. 36). As a mythic restoration of this process, as mentioned before, these tribes “regarded themselves as descended from a theriomorphic mythical ancestor. The military initiations of the Indo-Europeans involved a ritual transformation into a wolf: the paradigmatic warrior appropriated the behavior of a carnivore” (Eliade, 1981, p. 36).

Fine (1983) confirms the linkage between these invasions of these nomadic people on ancient Greece and India. “From the closing centuries of the third millennium, these wanderers of ‘Indo-European’ speech began to migrate, for various reasons and at different times, into India, the Iranian plateau, Asia Minor, the Balkans, including Greece, Italy, and many other parts of Europe” (pp. 4-5). Just as early Cretan civilization was destroyed by the invaders, the early Indus Valley Civilization was also destroyed by the same stock of people who showed no mercy to women or children. We see the glimpse of the destruction in the epics under study. According to Pomeroy et al. (1999), “A warrior society is forced to breed into its future warriors a savage [*sic*] joy in the grim ‘works of Ares’ a lust to annihilate the enemy… Homeric Greeks are not only fierce in war but also savage [*sic*] in victory: they loot and burn captured villages, slaughter the male survivors including the infants, and rape and enslave the women and girls” (p. 60). In this sense, warriors, conquerors, and military aristocracies carry on the symbolism and ideology of hunters, as Eliade (1981) puts it.

Though some scholars think that Achilles' brutality is the result of his being shell-shocked, regarding his treatment of Hector's body and necrophilia with the Amazon queen, it appears more likely to have been a culturally-driven brutality. Expanding his theory, Eliade (1981) states: "The pursuit and killing of a wild animal becomes the mythical model for the conquest of a territory (*Landnama)* and the founding of the state. Among the Assyrians, the Iranians, and the Turko-Mongols the techniques of hunting and war are so much alike as to be hardly separable." He further expounds, "The hundreds of thousands of years spent in a sort of mystical symbiosis with the animal world have left indelible traces" (p. 36). The Assyrian king Assurbanipal's treatment of dismembering the bodies of his enemies and feeding them to the dogs is paradigmatic of Achilles' treatment of Hector's body. Rama's dismembering of Kumbakarna, Ravana's brother, and Lakshmana, the brother of Rama, as well as lopping off the nose, breasts and the ears of Surpanaka are parallel scenes.

Campbell (1991) substantiates Eliade's theory here:

> "Then came the invasions. Now, these started seriously in the 14th millennium B.C. and became more and more devastating. They came in from the North and from the South and wiped out cities overnight. The genesis is the part played by Jacob's tribe in the fall of the city Shechem. Overnight, the city is wiped out by these herding people who have suddenly appeared. The Semitic invaders were herders of goats and sheep, the Indo-Europeans of cattle…. when you have herders, you have

> killers, because they are always in movement, nomadic, coming into conflict with other people and conquering the areas into which they move" (p. 213).

The conquest of Minoan culture by the Achaean tribes is comparable to the triumph of Indo-European conquerors and of the Aryans over the Indus culture of the Dravidians.

# Chapter 5: Bride-Stealing

## Introduction

This chapter investigates multiple aspects of the practice of bride-stealing, relating those aspects to central aspects of gender statuses which can cause the supremacy of one gender over the other. It scrutinizes the kinship patterns (i.e., patrilineal v. matrilineal) with regard to social constructs and their semiotic significance. Finally, it deals with the impact of bride-stealing physiologically, psychologically and sociologically.

## Gender Statuses

Bride-stealing in the epics has been misconstrued because of the gender differences in which it is steeped**. "**Gender difference could be biological, social, or some combination of the two" (Minas, 1993, P. 5). The principal theory in opposition to feminism has been biological determinism with an allied evolutionary framework focused on "sexual dimorphism." Although based on sexual dimorphism, some feminists argue that the human female is natural "prey" to the human male due to the relatively fragile anatomical construction of a woman's body.

Yanagisako, Junko and Collier (1987), in questioning analytical dichotomies, examine those of "nature/culture" (Ortner, 1974) "domestic/public" (Rosaldo, 1974: Yanagisako, 1987), and "reproduction/production" (Harris & Young, 1981). As Yanagisako et al. (1987) put it, "Each of these has been said to structure relations between men and women in all societies and, therefore, to offer a universal explanation

of sexual inequality. Whereas the dichotomies of domestic/ public and nature/culture are more in line with structuralist perspectives, the distinction between reproduction and production has emerged from a functionalist-Marxist perspective" (p. 5).

Jaggar (2008) stressed concepts of biological determinism and sexual dimorphism for the marginalization of women (pp. 105-106). However, Bardwick (1971) laid emphasis on the psychological impacts a society might have from the biocultural conflicts (p. 5). Jaggar (2008), a proponent of biological determinism, stated that biological determinist theories justify the subordination of women by suggesting that certain features of human social life are uniquely determined by the genetic constitution of human beings (pp. 105-106). Minas (1993), a proponent of biocultural theory, blamed gender differences, specifically human reproductive anatomy, for social differences (p. 5). Finally, Bardwick (1971) demonstrated the differences between male and female brains by saying that "Evidence of sex-linked differences in the hypothalamus makes it plausible to hypothesize that there are also sex-linked differences between males and females in the central nervous system" (p. 83). In contrast to these biologically determinist positions, Karen Horney, (1926) one of the few female psychoanalysts to look at these issues, attributes the cause of subjugation of women by men to "phallocentrism." She argues that Freud's theories resonate with phallocentrism, justifying misogynic attitudes towards women (pp. 50-65).

While feminists have generally limited their views to concepts based on biology and psychology, Levi-Strauss (1976) has concentrated on the structure of the kinship

system and logical relations in the inventory of kinship system. Levi-Strauss notes: "The positive and negative symbols… represent an oversimplification, useful only as a part of the demonstration… In many systems the relationship between two individuals is often expressed not by a single attitude, but by several attitudes which together form, as it were, a bundle of attitudes" (p. 86). Henaff (1998) sums up Levi-Strauss' analysis of kinship thus: "the systems of kinship taken as a whole include two very different levels of reality: (1) the system of appellations made up of the kinship vocabulary; and (2) the system of attitudes that is the set of behaviors of individuals (classes of individuals) in their relations" (p. 83).

Social structure, for Radcliffe- Brown (1952), is a way in which individuals of a group associate themselves within a society. For Levi-Strauss (1976), it is the phonological system of structural linguistics. This structural linguistics is a key to divulging the building blocks of kinship in societies. Hence, a componential analysis of the term 'bride,' for example, becomes imperative for gauging the nature of culturally-constructed kinship in different societies. Following this reasoning, a cross-cultural survey of the words "bride" and "stealing," is analyzed in connection with the bride-stealing aspects of *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam.*

**Kinship Patterns**

Basing his views on the semiotics of subjectivity, one of two directions possible to take in an attempt to understand a language, Parmentier (2008) states that: "the first focuses on the abstract systematicity of language as a means of semiotic representation,

and the second focuses on the social effectiveness of speaking in particular interactional contexts" (p. 305). While Parmentier (2008) takes the language as semiotic, Levi-Strauss (1969) conceives of society as an aggregate of signs; a structure or the society's system of communications as the totality of functions. To him, kinship patterns can be traced from the structure of the language of kinship. Levi-Strauss (1969) opines that the function of language "is the conception of the spoken word as communication, as power and as action represents a universal feature of human thought" (p. 494). Thus, Levi-Strauss (1969) maintained that anthropology is, in a sense, a branch of linguistics. Taking his focus on language as a means of semiotic representation that centers on interactional contexts, the derivation of a word is symptomatic of the action that can be traced to its origin (p. 494). The word "bride," for example, derived from the word "bride-ale," a Welsh bidding custom.

**Semiotic Significance of Social Constructs**

The analysis of connotative and denotative derivational significance of the words "bride" and "wife" reflect women's position in society. Echoing the views of Parmentier (2008) on language, Eagleton (1998, p. 84) notes that "Saussure viewed language as a system of signs." According to Saussure (1959) himself, "The linguistic entity exists only through the associating of the signifier with the signified" (p. 102). Eagleton (1998) explains it thus: "Each sign was to be seen as being made up of a 'signifier,' (a sound-image, or its graphic equivalent) and a 'signified' (the concept of meaning)" (p. 84). Language as a means of semiotic representation has not escaped the

attention of linguistic anthropologists for the richness it contributes to their understanding of culture. The social reality it reflects is the virtual representation of the connecting element between cause and effect. In the same vein, structuralism analyzes the symbolic formulations of ideologies as determinants of functionalism. As Eagleton (1998) writes, "Structuralism, as Frederic Jameson has put it, is an attempt to 'rethink everything through once again in terms of linguistics" (p. 84). Hence, structural and functional analysis commences with the structural examination of language. Guerin et al. (1992) write, "By no means confined to the study of literature, structuralism has been applied to linguistics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, folklore, mythology, and Biblical studies- in fact, to all social and cultural phenomena" (p. 237). They also opine that, in addition to being scientific and objective, structuralism "identifies structures, system of relationships, which endow signs…. or items… with identities and meanings, and shows us the ways in which we think." That language is a manifestation of the inner mind workings of human beings and the human beings' conscious or unconscious meaningful interactions with one another is explicit here. This view is substantiated by Rossi's (1982) statement, "The forms of social life cannot be understood without an inquiry in the fundamental structures of the human mind" (p. 15). Therefore, the derivations of the sociolinguistic words "bride" and "wife" suggest that cultural clues are embedded in them.

The inner workings of society are mirrored in the usage of terms expressed by different cultures. For example, “the bride-ale,” a fund-raising party in Welsh customs, may be viewed as the functional structure of a society’s effort to back up the financial strain of a newly married couple, and the word “bride,”as a denotation of kinship, may be associated with the functional codes of relationships among kith and kin. Conversely, the simple explication in Norse and Old English that bride means “one owned or purchased” treats the objective meaning of the term. But, the meaning of “groom” as one who serves the bride is also a consequential code connecting kinship with the one purchased and owned. However, it may also signify that a woman is bought and owned like an object. The logical relation that the social customary action of bride price reflects is the constitutive of monetary transaction between the families of the bride and groom. The compensation of the labor lost in the original household of the bride is compensated monetarily in bride price, and hence, it mirrors an economic transaction as well as a kinship code. In this light, Quale (1988) informs us that the increasing restrictions on women’s activity, signaled by the code of Manu, probably came from “the wish to protect women from kidnapping and rape, in the face of invasion after invasion from Central Asia and Afghanistan into the North India plain (sending others southward as refugees, who then became invaders in the south” (p. 151). This coincides with the name given to women as *ghwibh*, shame. (Ghwibh is an Old English word from Germanic root). He adds that it was an economic reality of life in times of upheavals that abductions of women were common.

Contrarily, the ancient Greeks, bearing resemblance to the above concept of sexual implications with a variance, call a wife '*dig'*, which "viewed marriage as a form of ploughing the soil (arotoes) the woman symbolizing the furrow (arota) and the man the ploughman (arotor)" (Vernant, 1983, p. 139). Here, a woman is made comparable to sacred mother earth, and the man as a plowman have sexual but sacred creative connotations in digging and sowing of seed. Thus, as Vernant (1983) expounds, "Significance of words, the syntax and semantics of a language is the unconscious manifestation of the structures of kinship" (p. 139). The cross-cultural interpretation of this word leaves the assumption that the tribal cultures which perceive women as objects, either sexually, pro-creatively, or as a means of production, have a greater chance of indulging in bride-stealing than cultures like the ancient Greeks or pre-Greeks who respected women for symbolizing the fecundity of the earth. Thus, it is suggested that gender differences are culturally constructed. The proto-Greek culture which is depicted as warrior tribes in *The Iliad* treats women like objects. It is diametrically opposite to the Trojans, whose main occupation was seafaring and trading.

**Stealing**

Fletcher (2000) defines the English *Larceny Act of 1916* as follows: any person "who without the consent of the owner, fraudulently and without a claim of right made in good faith, takes anything capable of being stolen" (p. 111). Thus, bride-stealing, by common consent, is a fraudulent activity wrought by people who abduct helpless women with the intent of abusing them. Stealing has been studied as a psychological

disorder, an innate ailment in human behavior resulting in social disorder. In bride-stealing, it echoes the precept of biological determinism in which relative fragility leads to taking advantage of the feminine gender.

Elucidating on the guilt that is entailed in the transgression of a fraudulent action, Stanovsky (2006) elaborates on the Freudian theory that the power of conscience in the superego is the cause of guilt as an effect of evil. According to him, Bernard Williams coined the word “moral luck,” attributing luck to being the cause of either moral or immoral activities. Nagel (1979), basing his theories on *extrinsic* or *intrinsic* luck, further “subdivides these categories into the four cases: constitutive, circumstantial, causal, and resultant luck.” Applying the same theories for action, it can be constitutive in which “a person's "inclinations, capacities, and temperament," are included and, the circumstantial action concerns "the kind of problems and situations one faces," whereas causal and resultant luck refer to those factors beyond the agent's control that affect either what actions are taken or the outcome of those actions. Therefore, the constitutive, circumstantial and causal actions of bride-stealing need to be scrutinized with consideration of the resultant disastrous action that befalls.

Stealing may occur due to shortage, but kleptomania is a mental disorder with an uncontrollable urge to steal. In a similar fashion, the psychological motive behind the constitutive action of the agent of bride-stealing is the inclination he has toward the bride. It could be unrequited love, or obsession with women or a particular woman, but the behavior may also arise as a disorder in which, in his capacity of physical might, a

man attempts to steal a bride, a helpless, fragile woman. The dowry, bride price and the shortage of women can be circumstantial allied causes. Hence, bride-stealing, as depicted in the epics, needs to be analyzed as to whether it is a psychological disorder or "innate ailment" in social behavior and whether it is constitutive, causal or resultant.

Ayres (1974) writes: "Most authors have viewed bride theft as a rational strategy for obtaining scarce but socially valued resources" (p. 245). For example, women of ancient times undertook weaving as a way of generating economic gain. A woman slave or additional wife can contribute to the household income by weaving. So, the labor of a woman in the household becomes consequential.

It is the productive hands of ancient women and their weaving that places them in demand. Agamemnon preferred Breisis because she was as productive as his wife Clytemnestra in weaving, and we see Helen in King Priam's house, "weaving a web of double width and of iridescent purple" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad*, Book III, Lines 141-143). "So by day she'd weave at her great and growing web, by night she'd unravel all she'd done" (Norton, 2009, *Odyssey,* Book II, Lines 115-117) are the lines that introduce Penelope's ruse to cheat her suitors. Andromache is seen weaving in Priam's palace. Babbling Thersites does not babble when he yells at King Agamemnon, toward whom the indignant Achaeans feel wrath and resentment, that whenever a city was sacked, Agamemnon gets "the choicest booty, including whole bevies of beautiful women," and he also adds that Agamemnon prefers "a ripe young lady to sleep with" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book II, Lines 270-71 & 276). To support Thersites' comments, Agamemnon

vouches why he is reluctant to give up Chryses: "I much prefer to have her at home with me," and comparing her with his wife, he says, "For this girl is quite her equal, just as tall and good-looking, just as smart and clever with her hands**"** (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book I, Lines 128-129 & 130-132).

The above seems to be historically true of Homeric society, as Pomeroy et al. (1999) observe in Homeric society. As in later Greece, women were under the strict control of their male relatives and husbands from birth to death. They were the most valuable prizes of raid and war, not only because of their intrinsic value as workers and concubines, or as goods to be bartered or given away, but also because capturing an enemy's mother, wife, daughter, or sister was the ultimate insult (Pomeroy et al., 1999, p. 62). "In later Greece" is an interesting phrase that connotes the time after the nomadic invasion, when women had lost their once-held freedom. As we saw earlier among the ancient Greeks, when ransoming was a way of life, and irrespective of whether it involved women or flocks, the latter were considered valuable resources and men of war used them as such. When Helen was abducted by Theseus, Helen's brothers rescued her and brought his mother Aethra, and his friend Pirithous's sister, as slaves for Helen. Graves (2002) mentions the fact that these two women accompanied Helen and Paris to Troy when they eloped (p. 577). Thus, these phenomena become part of the psychological characteristics of the society. In sum, the analyses of the data gleaned from the epics suggest that gender differences in the treatment of women are not biologically determined, but are psychological phenomena that originate from social

behavior. Thus, they are culturally constructed, reflecting the tendency of patriarchal societies to marginalize women, heightened in times of war.

**Impact of Bride-Stealing**

The feminist voice pays attention to the power of language to frame thought and action (Worell & Etaugh, 2007). Among the underlying themes and values that bind feminist research are "asking new questions about women and their lives," asserts Worell and Etaugh (2007). Brownmiller (1975) discusses on the repercussions of the physical conquest of a woman by a man: " Not only might the female be subjected at will to a thoroughly detestable physical conquest… but the consequences of such a brutal struggle might be death or injury, not to mention impregnation and the birth of a dependent child" (p. 16). Andromache's mother died delivering the baby of her abductor. As might be expected from the scuffle with a physical conqueror, the corollaries of psychological sociological consequences of these physical violations are summed up in the Brownmiller (1975) statement.

**Physiological effects.**

As mentioned before**,** some feminists believe that nature initiated discriminatory acts against women by making them fragile and tender. About biological determinism, Waring states: "Biological determinist theories suggest that certain features of human social life are uniquely determined by the genetic constitution of human beings" (2008, pp. 97-98). The same view is echoed by Crawley, Foley and Shehan (2008): "To believe that a real difference between women and men reside in the body… is the basis of

evolutionary theory or biological determinism – the notion that women and men have been bred to be different animals, adapting to evolutionary functional necessities" (p. 4). However, they argue that the gender difference is socially constructed. In contrast, biological determinism focuses more on sexual dimorphism than social constructs. By common consent, sexual dimorphism is a diagnostic phenotypic variation in male and female biology in the same species, while often referring to morphological likenesses, it also focuses on the notion that female physiology is different from that of strong male physiology, particularly upper body strength. In this case, difference does not mean inferiority. Yet, immeasurable violent aberrant acts are directed towards women because of both morphological and physiological differences.

Things get rocky when female differences in morphology are taken for granted as inferior and, resulting in the "manhandling" of women. This can have telling effect, including bodily injury and death. Immediate female bodily reactions to male aggression are enumerated as rapid heart rate and elevated blood pressure due to increased adrenaline. This is in support of medical research of Smith (2002) who notes that increased adrenaline " in times of fear or stress" causes increases in blood pressure and heart rate; breathing increases, levels of blood glucose increase" (p. 177). This is the stark reality of the situation: a man is mightier than a woman and hence, capable of harming her bodily, mentally, and spiritually. Their bodies become something to loathe after the sexual victimization. The world of everyday life, under such circumstances, turns into an abyss with implacable social discontent. Sometimes the impacts on the

affected women extend from simple injury to totally paralytic conditions in which they become a burden to the family and not to the abductors who never commit to any responsibility for them.

**Psychological effects.**

The psychological impact on sexually violated women is far-reaching. Contrary to Waring's argument that biologically deterministic theories announce the subordination of women (2008, pp. 97-98), physical dichotomies in gender simply provide part of the basis for the different roles men and women play in society. The tenderness and the fragility of a woman, when violated, can lead to multiple consequences. In addition, the feeling of physical pain of violated women registers itself as an emotional roller-coaster which, sometimes, results in suicides, due to the shame they experience, a biological factor transforming itself into a psychological factor. Helen's anguish is clear when she felt "an irresistible yearning for her former husband," and cried softly (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Line 159), and said that "All the women in Troy would blame me, and my misery is already boundless" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Lines 452-453). Helen describes herself as "shameless" (literally, 'bitch-hearted me') (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Line 203). Her regret and shame are plain and immeasurable.

Paradigmatically, Sita, on being abducted, "wilted like a burnt sprig: trembles, was spent, fell and rose, and prayed to Dharma to protect her" (Sundaram, 1991, Book 3, verse 3392). She calls out to the mountains, peacock, *koel*, (nightingale) elephant,

and forest nymphs to take the message to her husband. Hoping her husband will be able to find her, she desperately keeps throwing her jewels one by one to leave a trail. She resembled, in her lament, the "*anril*" bird that does not survive the loss of its spouse. Her misfortune is analogous to the fall of the support staff for ivy.

Shame is then another psychological impact that women undergo as a result of their physical violation. Connerton (1989) opines that cognitive psychologists acknowledge the semantic code as a mental map acquired in childhood, and, as such, is code that is shared collectively (p. 31). Connerton (1989) explicates the term, "shame," by making the distinction of *rules* as an acquired pursuit of moral ideas indoctrinated by the society from *habits* are appropriate means for achieving the ends which our education has inculcated. "A term like "shame" refers to a certain type of situation, the shameful, and to a certain manner of response to the situation, that of hiding oneself or of seeking to wipe out the stain" (p. 31). He sums up that a term like "shame" "can be explained only by reference to a specific language of interaction in which we blame, exhort, admire, and esteem each other. The victim's self-censuring tendency and the shame of losing face in the society in the event of being stolen create ripples in her emotional state until the end of her life. The conflict of opposing mental forces between the self in relation to the body and the self in our interactions with the world as explored by George Herbert Mead (1934, 1964) causes total damage to the psyche of the person violated (Keel, 2013).

The shame factor is more predominant in *The Kamba Ramayanam* than in *The Iliad*. "A high valuation of virginity" or purity (chastity) among women may be the causal factor in not only in Sita's victimization, but also in Rama's shame on loss of the duty of protecting his wife. The impact of shame, due to the loss of his wife had on Rama, is expressed here:

> 3473
>
> "கூடு தன்னுடையது பிரிந்து, ஆர் உயிர், குறியா,
> நேடிவந்து, அது கண்டிலது ஆம் என நின்றான்."
>
> 3475
>
> "மண் சுழன்றது; மால் வரை சுழன்றது; மதியோர்
> எண் சுழன்றது; சுழன்ற, அவ் எறி கடல் ஏழும்;
> விண் சுழன்றது; வேதமும் சுழன்றது; விரிஞ்சன்
> கண் சுழன்றது; சுழன்றது, கதிரொடு மதியும்". (Kambar: Aaranya Kaandam, 2001, verses 3473 & 3475).

"He was stunned like a soul returning to his body which looks for it and cannot find it; the earth whirled; the great mountains whirled; the thoughts of seven sages, the seven seas, the sky, the Vedas, the eyes of Brahma the sun and the moon—all whirled" (Sundaram, 1991, Book 3, verses, 3473 & 3475). Kambar equates his mental state to that of a man who was deprived of his sustenance, who buried all his wealth in a pot in the ground and found that a knave had taken it away. His shame is explicit here as his thoughts revolve around the Vedas in which it clearly is mentioned that the safekeeping of the wife is a pivotal duty of a husband.

**Sociological effects.**

In a society which insists that women must not be exposed to even a nominal risk of unchastity, the position of stolen women has tremendously greater repercussions than in a more permissive society. The abuse an abducted woman goes through becomes a matter of disgrace, and may even impel her to prostitution perfunctorily. Basham (1956) writes: "Once she (a girl in India) had lost her virginity she would become unmarriageable, and the parents would have the choice of the disgrace and expense of maintaining an unmarried daughter indefinitely, or the even greater disgrace of casting her out to become a beggar or a prostitute" (p. 167). Chastity is a cultural conditioning intrinsically infused with religious insistence on the necessity of progeny. Though recommended for both genders, it is enforced on women, and many experts believe that it is the cause of lower divorce rates in India. For example, the ideology of chastity linked with "the necessity of progeny" may interblend with the religious rituals of cremation. It is a belief in India that the son should perform the funerary rights for the parents. The religious perspective on the normative order of cremation rituals moves beyond the realities of everyday life. Therefore, purity in begetting progeny played a vital part in the conventions of society.

The victims of bride-stealing are forced, sometimes, to marry the abductors and, in that case, the status of marital bliss becomes a questionable one. This is a brutal reality that happened in certain nomadic communities in ancient times, and it happens today in Kyrgyzstan (Kleinbac, Abelzova & Aitieva, 2005). The word *ala kachuu*

(literally meaning “the act of abducting a woman to marry her”) reflects the fact that the practice of bride-stealing appears to be an established and respected custom in certain pockets of central Asian society. While the day-to-day life of these women is unimaginable, the children these marriages produce also go through significant trauma. There would appear to be no potential for love in *ala kachuu* types of marriages; rather, hatred is more likely to be the foundation of this type of marriage or dominance, prestige and control may play a vital part. The physical and mental cruelty, sometimes, result in marriage breakup and divorce. Though this kind of marriage is accepted in this part of the world, how the couple can create a stable bond between themselves is a matter of concern, and the impact that it can have on children of these marriages has its own dynamism in terms of societal consequences.

## Chapter 6: Bride-Stealing as a Nomadic Custom

### The Laws of Evolution

Burke (1992) states that "'The comparative method'…was historical in the sense that it involved placing every society (indeed, every custom or artifact) on an evolutionary ladder," (p. 8). According to Burke (1992), while Edward Tylor (1871, as cited in Burke) and Lewis Henry Morgan described the shift in social change as a move from a wild or natural state of mankind, Herbert Spencer called the development one from "military" to "industrial" (p. 8). Burke (1992) notes that the geographer Friedrich and the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt studied about the so-called "people of nature," the first concentrating on the adaptation to the environment and the second on their collective mentalities (p. 8). According to them, in earlier times of humanity, women were stolen frequently. Similarly, bride-stealing is a nomadic custom, according to McLennan (1876) and Kohler (1975). "Soft lands tend to breed soft men; for the same land cannot yield both wonderful crops and men who are noble and courageous in war" (Herodotus: Histories: 9, 122). Defying the theory of the unilinear evolution of mankind, Kohler (1975) "argues that evolution within one people may proceed unequally, so that one aspect of their culture may advance while another stagnates; and it is even possible for a culture to regress" (p. 15).

In the early stages of evolution, the nomadic tribes were exceedingly numerous, and exceedingly small, being a species of family groups. According to McLennan (1876), they were continually at war with one another, and the men accustomed to associate with acts of violence and rapine (p. 61).

Fogelson (1989) asserts, "Events involve processes, changes, happenings, acts, transformations and other features." Fogelson, an ethnohistorian, asserts that events entail primary elements in the study of history. He argues that they must be analyzed and interpreted in a particular setting to be explanatory. To get the grasp of the context, Ricoeur believes that the continual interaction between past and present with the relevance of current events as clues serves as a mode of discovery of previously overlooked connections in past history. Thus, historical events must be studied "stratigraphically as a series of contiguous past presentisms."

In a qualitative study of mock abduction of a bride in contemporary marriages, Ayres (1974) confirms that it is a contiguous past presentism. It connects the present with the past events. Monger (2004), in writing about the marriage customs of the world asserts that wife-stealing (*Milla Mangkondi*) was prevelant within a Kaurna aboriginal group from South Australia (p. 3). The Psychocultural beliefs linked to endogamy and exogamy among the ancient tribes led to the kidnapping of women, according to John McLennan (1876, pp. 204-205) who believed that incest avoidance was the root of exogamous practice among Australian aborigines (pp. 204-205). In contrast, Durkheim's explanation of the origin of exogamy is genealogical. He argued

that religious prohibitions concerning menstrual bleeding are linked to the blood of the clan and thus to the totem. Hence, totemic establishments originated among tribes to avoid the endogamous exchange of women, and the refusal of reciprocity due to constant conflict among the tribes led to the abduction of women. This is the origin of bride-stealing in tribal communities, and it became transformed into multiple dimensions accommodating different historical events. Intermarriage, trade and even employment have marked hunting societies' contacts with outsiders. Since there was a strong collective identity that differentiated and maintained these societies, this led swiftly to conflicts, and negotiation of exchange of women for exogamous relationships sometimes led to conflict and was not always feasible. Hence, bride-stealing was frequent among many societies. Similar conditions may lead to such a situation in present times.

McLennan (1876) ferrets out the prevalence and underpinnings of this aberrant practice from prehistory, refuting the view of Festus and Muller who attributed an early period of lawlessness among the primitive tribes [*sic*] to the action of men. In "an early period of lawlessness", [*sic*] (McLennan, 1876, p. 33) as portrayed by Festus and Muller, "in which it was with women as with other kinds of property, that he should take who had the power, and he could keep who could" (as cited in McLennon, 1876, p. 33). Hence, might was right. Conversely, McLennan (1876) contends similarly to Levi Strauss, that a savage mind [*sic*] operated in the same way as a modern mind, irrespective of the time and space that separated them. Albeit that the power element

as a predominant factor between groups has been noted from prehistoric times until today, certain ordinances adhered to by tribal customs were as germane as they are today.

The connubium prohibited marriage between the members of the same clan as incestuous; it was imperative to find a woman from a different clan. Therefore, aboriginal people vied for women outside of their clan, and the constant strife between the clans necessitated bride abduction. The parallel praxis of engraving the details about their clans is found in the totem poles of Northwest Pacific Native Indian clans reflecting marriage arrangements with the connubium from a different clan. In India, the same intent manifests itself in determining the marriage association of a boy from a different family whose deity is other than the deity of the girl among the Dravidians. Similarly, the Brahmins who are Aryan descendants have the developmental strategy of the descendants through the Rishis, and they call it *Gothra*. "Gothra" means clan (Werner, 1994, p. 71). People belonging to the same *gothra* are prohibited from marrying each other. Thus, McLennan (1876) has a point in contending that it is strategic logic that was at work among the ancient people. However, the "lawlessness" expounded by Festus and Muller, has some elements of truth to it as well, and this exclusive feature of the tribes enabled them to obtain labor from other clans if and when they needed more hands either for productive or reproductive purposes.

Labor-intensive nomadic lifestyles perpetuated this mode of obtaining women from other groups for effective management of their own workforce. Therefore, the

progenies of these women are productive additions to the economic gain of the tribe. The production and reproduction aspects of Marxist theory can be applied here, as women being both the means and the end based on the gain obtained from them. According to the division of labor in a tribal community, men were the means of production and women the reproduction. Though women's chores centered on the upbringing of strong progeny, they were also independent participants in the domestic workforce. The more children a woman begat, the more hands the community obtained for economical gain. Vikings, for example, stole women from other clans to produce more soldiers. As Marx put it, a wife is among the necessities of a worker. This is the way in which a tribal society exploited women. Sometimes, it was extended to take vengeance on the enemy.

**Historical Perspective**

The historical accounts of tribal customs, as revealed in scriptures and history books, are legitimate subjects of inquiry to delve into the past for clarity of understanding of the concept of bride-stealing. Brownmiller (1975) reports the capture of women in Genesis:

> "As told in Genesis, Dinah was a virgin daughter of Jacob by Leah. She was raped by a gentile when she left the house one day to visit some female friends. Dinah's attacker, who was not without his own tribal code, then applied to Jacob's family for permission to marry the woman he had violated. Pretending agreement, Jacob's sons suggested to the

> eager young man that he and all the male members of his uncivilized tribe undergo the ritual of circumcision. Three days later, the Bible tells us, when the gentile tribe was still sore from the painful operation, Jacob's sons descended on their encampment, slaughtered the weakened men and made captives of their women and oxen." (p. 21).

Therefore, the tribal activity of bride-stealing we see in the Bible is the same "lawlessness" of tribal activities.

The historical evidence of bride-stealing demonstrates this social phenomenon as a connecting link between mythological and historical symbolism. The mythology is often interwoven with a tinge of fantasy, resulting in incredible narrations that include historical events engraved with elements of truth. In an analogous fashion, Indian history shows evidence that the customary practice of abducting brides did take place as it does in romantic fiction (Majumdar, Chaudhuri & Data, 1970, p. 270). Samyukta, the princess of Raja Jaichand of Kannauj, falls in love with Prithviraj, the king of Delhi, but he belonged to the rival Rajput clans. On the day of Swayamvara, a kind of marriage in which a princess chooses one of the princes accumulated in the court at the invitation of the king, Samyukta garlands the statue of Prithviraj, kept at the threshold of the court to spite him as a doorman. The real Prithviraj who was hiding behind the statue, grapples and whisks her away to Delhi. Prithviraj was a Rajput. As Basham (1956) puts it, Rajputs are Central Asian nomadic tribes "known to Byzantine writers as Hephisthalites or White Huns" "who were in no way related to the Huns of Attila, but were of Iranian stock"

(p. 66). These were acclimatized fierce raiders who destroyed the older martial tribes of Rajasthan. The story of Samyukta proclaims the conflict among the tribes in territorial occupation of the land among various tribes in north India following the Aryan invasion. Hence, the abduction of Samyuktha is a notorious tribal activity with the differential element of romance and consensual constituents embedded in it.

The historical narrations of abductions of Sabine women are classic exemplars of how empires are founded and aggressors use women as pawns in their political games. "The Abduction of Sabine Women," reflects a subject of artistic splendor, the customary practice of the tribes in their attempt to found an empire. With a scheme of founding a city, Romulus, the son of Ilias and Mars, reached the Palantine Hill by the Tiber Crossing. Since the shepherd band of Romulus had no women, they promptly raided their neighbors and abducted 30 women to be their brides. Fantham et al. (1994) shed light on this event through the account of Ennius (239-169 B.C.), and also add the compromise they developed to: "When the next campaign season came around and their angry parents mobilized the village militias to attack Rome, the Sabine wives rushed on to the battlefield with their Roman babies to separate and reconcile the communities" (p. 217). This resulted in an end to the war and the sharing of the kingship of Rome by Romulus and Titus Tatius; the following two kings of Rome, Sabines and the descendants of Sabine women, became one of the 3 equites clans (*gens*) of ancient Rome (ranking immediately below the Patricians); nevertheless war with the hill-dwelling Sabines soon returned.

**Sati as a Corollary of Bride-Stealing**

The tribal custom of Sati originated from the lawlessness of the customary practice of bride-stealing among the tribes in ancient times. Though sati is an eponym for the wife of Lord Shiva who committed suicide by self-immolation due to an altercation between her father and husband, the word 'sati' eventually took on the meaning of "good woman" or "truthful woman" ("Sati," Women in World History). During the conflict between two tribes, as a vindictive act, one tribe stole the wife of another tribal leader. This led to the wives of the fallen leaders committing sati, placing their own bodies on the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands to avoid the cruelty meted out from the enemy group. Eventually, it became an honorable act of a devoted wife.

According to Sidhanth's (1929) statement in his *The Heroic Age of India,* sati, originally started from the royal families. As Hawley, Stratton and Wulff (1996) mention, sati was very common in the western state of Rajasthan in India, sati, originally started from the royal families especially among the Rajputs, a warrior class. These Rajputs were the fierce invaders who caused the downfall of the Gupta Dynasty in India. Sidhanth (1929) further states: "This practice of Suttee is not peculiar to India, but is found in Europe in the heroic stories and elsewhere. The earliest mention in European Literature is probably in Herodotus V.5.5." (p. 225). Herodotus writes about sati customs of the Kretonians, a group of Thracians who are mentioned in Homer's *The Iliad* as allies of the Trojans. Sidhanth avers that sati is found among the Thracian tribes as

well. It is noteworthy that these are warring communities. Along with the Thracian tribes, other tribes such as the Locrians, Taphians, Eurytanes, Pheocians, Myceneans, Malians, Dryopes, Aelotians, Acarnanians, and Amphilochians are mentioned in the Homeric epics. The Achaeans, as reflected in *The Iliad*, are the tribal people who overran the Minoan culture for their economic gain, and they indulged in bride-stealing. One such incidence is mentioned by the Historian Heroditus. "The Ionians founded twelve cities in Asia." (They) "brought no wives with them to the new country, but married Carian girls, whose fathers they had slain." The invaders "slew their fathers, their husbands, and their sons, and then forced them to become their wives" (Rawlinson, 1930, pp. 80-81).

In *The Iliad,* Laodamia is the wife of Protesilaus who deeply loved her husband and committed sati after her husband's death. Protesilaus was the first to heroically leap ashore on the Trojan land, and died at the hands of Hector, according to a prophecy situating that whoever landed on the Trojan land first would die. On seeing her agony, Hermes brought him alive to Laodamia for a few hours. When her husband died again, she threw herself onto his funeral pyre. Intriguingly, *The Kamba Ramayanam* refers to sati committed by the concubines of his harem. Verses 2238 and 2239 mention the way in which 60,000 wives of King Dasaratha beautified themselves with fine clothes and jewelry and then jumped into the fire. It is mysterious why the three queens did not commit sati. Thus, sati came to India along with the tribes who adjudged the honor of the widow as she was slain over her husband's grave.

History has it that Borte, who belonged to Hongjila tribe, married Genghis Khan and became the empress of the Yuan Dynasty. The Merkit tribe assaulted the encampment of Ghenghis Khan and abducted her in an act of vengeance when she was pregnant. The Merkit tribe's abduction of Genghis Khan's wife, falling under this category, was executed with an objective of retaliatory force. Thus, the tribes stole women from their enemies and ill-treated the queens after the fall of the kings.

**Bride-Stealing as a Legal Action**

Bride-stealing was common among the Aryans who came to the Indian continent from western Asia through the Hindu Kush Mountains. They deliberately chose women from the native Dravidians for the simple reason that the wives and women of their tribes could not pass through the rough terrain. Frawley, Feurestein and Kak (1995) write that "The Aryans who allegedly moved into India in the second millennium B.C. belonged to a late wave of Indo-European migrants" (p. 57). These Aryans were as "ruthless and merciless as the later Huns, conquering and subduing the native population of the Indian peninsula" (Frawley et al, 1995, p. 53). The Aryans, who invaded and subdued the Dravidians or the Elamites, were nomadic pastoralists. They refined their original language from one of the ethnicities called Nagars who are mentioned in *The Kamba Ramayanam*, and hence their version of Sanskrit language script is called *Deva Nagari*. Their sacred book, *The Laws of Manu,* legally accepts the abduction of women. Bhrigu's version, proclaimed by Manu, is based on "the teachings of 'Vedas,' on the decisions of those who are acquainted with the law, and on the

customs of virtuous Aryas" (Muller, 1886, p. pxi). Thus, it proclaims that the sacred laws are applicable to all Aryans. This allowed the Aryans to kidnap a Rakshasa woman or a Dravidian woman legally.

## Chapter 7: Comparative Analysis of Bride- Stealing: Helen and Sita

### Introduction

The acts of bride-stealing of Helen of Troy in *The Iliad,* and of Sita of *The Kamba Ramayanam* were similar with respect to the dynamic social phenomenon of bride-stealing in ancient times. This chapter compares and contrasts these with parallel incidents placing them within a meaningful theoretical framework. In addition, by interpreting textual and contextual structures, this chapter examines misogynistic elements that presumably prevailed in ancient times. By scrutinizing analogies and dichotomies, goal-oriented motives, the formulation of the situational logic behind the strategy, the *modus operandi* and the aftermath of this hideous act, the essential purpose of bride-stealing is explored. The analysis indicates that this act is not misogynistic, but the women involved were victims of war.

### Bride-Stealing in *The Iliad*

The theme of Homer's masterpiece, *The Iliad*, is a ghastly war between the Achaeans and the Trojans, supposedly triggered by the theft of Helen, the wife of Menelaus. When Paris, the younger son of the Trojan King Priam, slips away with Helen to Troy, Agamemnon, the brother of Menelaus, proceeds to Troy with prominent Achaean heroes to retrieve Helen. Thus, Helen of *The Iliad* i.e., like Sita in *The Kamba Ramayanam*, i.e., accountable for causing an insidious war that raged over ten years and claimed thousands of lives. "She wove not a few of the battles that the horse-

breaking Trojans and bronze-clad Achaeans had suffered at the hands of Ares on her account" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Lines 144-146).

**Bride-Stealing in *The Kamba Ramayanam***

*The Kamba Ramayanam* is an episodic narrative in Tamil**,** a secondary epic or a literary epic, composed by the sophisticated craftsman Kambar, in a deliberate attempt to present the immortalized Sanskrit story of Rama of Valmiki in a complete form of literature to Tamil-speaking people. Rama, the protagonist of the epic, an Aryan prince of Ayodhi*,* is exiled for fourteen years, leaving with his wife, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmanan, to the forest at the insistence of his stepmother who demands that her son, Bharatha, the younger brother of Rama, be crowned in his place. Aided by his military prowess, Rama takes it upon himself to guard the holy men, or *rishis*, of the forest from being attacked by the "Rakshashas" there, *Rakshas kul* being a pejorative name given to the Dravidians by the Aryans. Ravana, the antagonist of the epic and the king of the Rakshashas, with equally mighty valor, steals Rama's wife as a vendetta to save his sister Surpanaka's honor. Earlier, during a confrontation, Surpanaka's nose, ear, and breast were severed by Rama and his brother Lakshmana, when she was smitten by Rama's comely figure and expressed her love for him. Rama, in pursuit of his wife Sita, trails Ravana to Sri Lanka where Sita was a prisoner, and the war ensues. *The Kamba Ramayanam* is the story of the war between Rama, the Aryan prince, and Ravana, the Dravidian king, over Rama's wife. Thus, Sita may be compared to Helen of Troy whose face "launched a thousand ships."

**Comparisons between the Greek and Indian Epics**

The compelling similarities between Helen and Sita instantly rivet the attention of readers to their royal or divine parentage, their striking beauty, and their suffering as they were being stolen. The immortal Helen is the daughter of Zeus and Leda, adding divine affiliation to her birth. Similarly, Sita, the daughter of Janaka, king of Mithila, is, in fact, the daughter of Mother Goddess Earth, a gift bestowed on him for his wealth of knowledge in the Holy Scriptures (*Shastras*) and *Vedas* (Rajagopalachari, 1989, p. 34). Both Helen' and Sita's beauty is unparalleled and beyond any comparison. Helen's intoxicating beauty leaves people spellbound. In the bewitching scene in which Helen is watching both her husbands' impending duel from the Scaen wall, the elders Priam, Panthous, and Thymoetes and others, "when they saw Helen approaching, spoke softly one to another in these words with winged wonder, 'that surely no one could be blamed either side for suffering so much and so long for such a woman, for she in appearance is terribly like an immortal goddess!'"(Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Lines 172-177). Here is testimony to the unparalleled beauty of Helen. In the same vein, Kamban describes Sita through the words of Rama who gives final instructions to his monkey friend Hanuman before his departure in search of her. "The toes of her lovely feet are like slices of red coral from the milky ocean painted red and fitted with crescent moon in order" (Sundaram, 1992, Book 4, verse 33) and "Her great big sword eyes, wonderful, need a thousand eyes to comprehend (verse 54). And when lotus has pale petals, moon has a black spot, she eludes even the slightest fault." ("*Pullithazh kamalath theiva*

*poovirkum undu; Porpin ellaiyin madhikkum undaam, kalangam endru uraikkum eedham, allavun siridhu kutram agandrila*") (Kambar, 2002, Kishkinda kandam, verse 4506). Kamban adds that Sita matches the qualities expressed in *Samudrika Lakshanam*, a grammar book of women's beauty.

Helen's sorrow over her abduction is not tantamount to that of Sita's, as she is safe and secure within the walls of "home sweet home." Yet she deplores her decision of "deserting her marriage chamber and daughter precious, her blood relations and circle of charming friends (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Lines 195-197). Similarly, Sita "wilted like a burnt twig," as Ravana abducted her. Both Helen's and Sita's beauty and lineage are deemed contributing factors for their sufferings, but more detailed investigation shows that their exigencies are more than skin-deep. The historical background and the other literary evidence testify vividly to the operation of other factors underlying this bride-stealing situation, thus opening the crucial question regarding how women were treated in those days.

**Contrasts between the Greek and Indian Epics**

The act of bride-stealing entails underlying paradoxes manifested in the varying modes and cross-cultural differences in expression. For example, in *The Iliad*, the once-stolen Helen weaves, and even makes love with her second husband, while her first husband is just outside the gates in the midst of a fierce war. With no delineation of the abduction of Helen in the epic, it turns out to be a moot matter whether it was truly abduction or an elopement, it still is an act of a man stealing another man's wife. We

come to hear of it in the story's other narrative strand. Contrastingly, Sita's abduction, stemming as a vengeful act, entails the mutilation of Surpanaka, and gathers momentum in the strategic course of action of the antagonist, culminating in the abduction. Cultural dichotomy is observed in the ambivalence of Helen contrasted by the deracinated Sita, confined to a garden named *Asoka Vanam*, surrounded by the dreadful looking *Rakshas kul* women. Thus, she presents the picture of a prisoner while Helen is pictured as another member of the family, engaged in a domestic chore as women of those days did, weaving. Though expressive of her treacherous , depressive decision to desert her prior marriage bed, a new marriage bed awaits her, and she enjoys being another daughter-in-law of Priam's household, calling him her "own, dear father-in-law," whom she regards with "respect and reverence," and calls Hector "dear brother," in an endearing manner.

**Motive for Abductions**

Though lineage is imputed for the earlier rape of Helen by the King of Theseus, since she was the daughter of Zeus, the abduction of Helen by Paris does not manifest Paris's addiction to lineage. The motive behind the action, as arrived at through gleanings from the yardstick of those days used to measure the historical background, sheds some light on the situation. While the commonality here is the motive of the husbands who lost their wives vying for the retrieval of their wives, the causes of their abduction and their effects reveal the disparity in nature.

**The Iliad as War Poetry Depicting a Plundering Way of Life**

The dichotomy between the bride-stealing of Helen and Sita is in the motive of the abduction. Heiress stealing seems to have been the motive for the abduction of Helen, if it was abduction at all, while war strategy seems to have been the motive for the abduction of Sita. Helen's abduction becomes a disputed matter, as there is nothing concrete mentioned about in detail in *The Iliad.* Herodotus never believed that Helen eloped with Paris, and to add to the confusion, Euripides' play suggests that Paris abducted a phantom rather than Helen. However, the motive behind her abduction is clearly related to the historical values of the times. The codes of behavior in a plundering society, the emergence of regional chiefdoms, and qualities of bravery and skill accented in men in a colonizing age had a telling effect on the lives of women in the Homeric world. Raiding and ransoming were common in Homeric times. The strong competitive spirit, a symbol of courage, was used to justify these deeds as authoritative and heroic behavior. Thus, people were on the lookout for easy wealth, which is attainable in times of war as loot and ransom.

**Heiress Stealing**

"Abduction, especially of heiresses was a problem in Britain," writes Monger (2004, p. 1). He mentions how, at the time of Henry VII, legislation was enacted to prevent the practice. This has been an age-old practice to acquire easy wealth by abducting an heiress with riches. It parallels the quest of old men for a "nurse with a

purse." Brownmiller (1975) attests to the feudalistic practice of marriage customs in the early Middle Ages:

> "Since females were allowed to inherit property, a matter of necessity if there were no extant male heirs, 'trading in marriages,' to borrow a telling phrase from G.G. Coulton, was a lucrative enterprise among the nobility, practiced in much the same manner "as men trade in shares and investments today" (p. 24).

To validate her statement, she writes: "Eleanor of Aquitaine, according to a biographer, lived her early life in terror of being 'rapt' by a vassal who might through appropriation of her body gain title to her considerable property" (p. 17). She reaffirms that this custom of "stealing an heiress by forcible abduction and marriage became a routine method of acquiring property by adventurous, upwardly mobile knights." Paris, the brother of well- recognized Trojan hero "the valiant god-cherished Hector," with no way of proving his skill in war as his brother did, simply resorted to heiress stealing as a provenance of his manhood.

The question arises as to how Helen became the heiress with so much wealth when she had not only two elder sisters Clytemnestra and Tiamantra but also her brothers, "horse-mastering Castor and Pollux, good in a fist-fight, my own blood brothers for all of us had the same mother," (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Lines 258-260). It was a common practice that women inherited the riches of the parents in

matrilineal systems. Therefore, contrary to common belief, women enjoyed a major social role in the societies portrayed in the epics, before these wars erupted.

In classical mythology Ehrenberg (1989) writes,

> "Women are depicted as having considerable power and where descent is sometimes seen to be matrilineal. For example, Bachofen points to examples in the Homeric and other Greek myths where matrilineal is suggested. Oedipus, a penniless exile, becomes king by marrying Queen Jocasta, and Menelaus becomes King of Sparta when he marries Helen. Both these instances imply that the women have inherited their respective kingdoms" (pp. 63-64).

Thus, by marrying Helen, Menelaus married an heiress. Further investigation indicates that Spartan women possessed more power than their counterparts in Greece. Aristotle viewed Sparta as a *gynaikokratia* (Γυναικοκρατία) (i.e., a state ruled by women). He also "criticized the Spartan system of land tenure, which permitted women to own land and to manage their own property" (Fantham et al., 1994, p. 65), and "nearly two fifths of the land is in the possession of women, due to the fact that heiresses are numerous the customary dowries are large" (Aristotle, Politics 2.6.5-11 [1269b- 1270a]; Fantham et al., 1994, p. 65). Along these lines, Graves (2002) writes, "Homer faithfully describes the lives of his overlords who have usurped ancient religious titles by marrying tribal heiresses" (p. 609). Therefore, as per matrilineal customs, Helen is the heiress, and Menelaus' marriage with Helen and Paris' motive in abducting her from her husband are

the result of the fact that she is an heiress or that she has access to immense wealth. The social order in which women could own property was the alluring factor for people of acquisitive nature to vie for wealthy heiresses in the Homeric world.

### *The Kamba Ramayanam* as War Poetry

"The steps to war theory (Vasquez 1993) suggests… "power politics, including coercion in the face of territorial disputes, rivalry, hard-liners in power alliances, and arms races, are all important steps to war"(as cited in Valerino & Marin). Vasquez and Valeriano (2010) mention, "Wars over certain issues are likely to be preceded by different behavirol processes, especially in terms of the use of power politics practices." The dyadic war between the Aryans and Dravidians, spearheaded by the colonizing efforts of the Aryans on Dravidian land, was the cause of the onset of war. The behavioral process of bride-stealing in *The Kamba Ramayanam* becomes more meaningful under this interpretation. Pollock (2006), writing about Valmiki's original version of *Kamba Ramayanam,* noted that "…from their first acquaintance with *The Ramayana*, westerners have always found something highly problematic about the transition between the two books and between the two major portions of the epic they represent" (p. Intro 15). He wondered why there was so much discontinuity between the first two books and the rest of the books comprising the epic. In addition, Pollock conceptualized the whole story as simply a romance consisting of mythical elements. His confusion may have stemmed from a basic misconception of the above-mentioned crucial historical perspective. *The Kamba Ramayanm* is war poetry depicting the

gruesome struggle between the Aryans and the Dravidians over the control of the fertile lands of India. Hence, from the perspective of the Aryans, it is panegyric in nature, celebrating the success of Aryans subjugating the Dravidians.

The *Kamba Ramayanam*, the secondary epic, written at the insistence of a Tamil king to enrich the language, follows it closely enough in all its details. Both resonate with the same idea that Rama was born to kill Rakshas kul. Rama, though living in exile, vows that he is born to accomplish the ethnocide of the Rakshasas, thus becoming the archrival of Ravana, the king of *Rakshash kul*. Verses, 4146, 4845, 5322, 6022, 9616 and 9966 in the *Kamba Ramayanam*, clearly allude to Rama as an Aryan. Further, he aggrandizes the object of his birth, to exterminate the *Rakshas kul*, just before severing the nose, ear, and breast of Surpanaka, the sister of Ravana in verse 2866, in which he jingoistically claims that he will indulge in ethnocide of Rakshasas. Therefore, his goal is clear, but his rationalization for wiping out the *Rakshas kul* is that they are all "evil monsters." Pollock (2006) quotes from the book "The Forest," the third book of *Valmiki Ramayana*: "I come as king, nightstalker, to end the life of evildoers and all who wish the world ill" (p. 15). The image upholds Rama as a protector of the world. Conversely, the truth of the matter is that it, in fact, is a manifestation of the hegemonic attitude of Rama, vanquisher of an ethnicity.

Ulin (2001) expounds: "Cultural hegemony… pertains to a specific type of cultural domination that applies to situations where the distribution and reproduction of power in public life is at issue" (p. 176). History suggests that Ravana was an ardent

worshipper of Lord Shiva, a good ruler of a rich country, and the protector of his land. The text testifies to the same thing, but, the word *Rakshas* is an eponym for "evil monsters." The same holds true for *Arakki and Thadagai*, the feminine versions of monsters; Surpanaka means someone with long, ugly nails. The very names given in the epic, apart from the original names of these characters, reflect the intensity of hatred that prevailed between the two groups. When their power-control was threatened, their hegemonic animosity turned into political conflict. Therefore, Ramayana is not a myth, but an *Ithihaas,* which means in Sanskrit "that which occurred." It denotes that the war between the Dravidians and the Aryans occurred, and that Ravana, the protector of his own land, is depicted as a demon. Cognizance of this historical perspective and the Dravidian standpoint throw light on the chronological order in which the poets treated the theme as the magnanimity of the hero's birth and accomplishments. Encroachment on the land seems to be the cause for all of the events that followed. Therefore, the abduction of Sita is not a myth or romance as conceived by Pollock (2006), but an undeniable historical truth which stemmed out of Rama's hegemonic attitude and her retrieval is glorified in the architectonics of poetry.

**Bride-Stealing as a Strategy of War**

After their invasion, the Aryans dominated the north of India while below the Vindhya Mountain continued to be the Dravidian south. Under Dasaratha the 59$^{th}$ emperor of Ayodhi, who had an eye to expand and colonize the Ganga fertile basin, the *Rishis* or the overseers, in the name of doing *yagnas* (prayers), encroached upon the

land, and slowly moved to the Godhavari fertile basin. Panchavati, where Rama and his brother Lakshmana severed Surpanaka's nose, ear, and breast, is in the Godhavari basin. Thadagai, whom young Rama vanquished and butchered, was Ravana's grandmother. Subhahu, another victim killed by Rama, was his uncle; both victims were the original rulers of the land. Thus, the strife for controlling the land had been an ongoing struggle. Even today, India is segregated into the Aryan North and the Dravidian South. T. Barrow writes that,

> "Our knowledge of the Aryans in India during this period is based primarily on this (*Rig Veda*) work. A series of related tribes, settled mainly in the Punjab and adjacent regions, speaking a common language, sharing a common religion, and designating themselves by the name *Arya*, are represented as being in a state of permanent conflict with a hostile group of peoples known variously as Dasa or Dasyu. From the frequent references to these conflicts it emerges that the result was the complete victory of the Aryans" (1975, p. 20).

He also clarifies that *dasa* becomes the usual word for slave. He continues, "North India is referred to as Aryavarta, 'the country where Aryans live'" (1975, p. 20). Thus emerges the historical truth about the colonizing efforts of the Aryans, of whom Rama is one. The conqueror's language speaks, and the conquereds transmogrify into monsters. In the same vein, *Dasa* is a pejorative term for the enemies whom they subjugated, but these *Dasas* incidentally became the strongest contenders for the language of the Indus

Valley Civilization. Archaeological evidence suggests that these Aryans were not "civilized" between nomadic pastoral "barbarians." [*sic*] This view is supported by Shendge (1977), who calls the Harappans, or the then occupants of the Indus Valley Civilization mentioned in the *Rig Veda*, as "civilized demons" (p. 31).

Rama, after his exile, moved from North India to South India. Verse 2698 affirms that, at the insistence of the sage Agathiar, Rama with his wife and brother reached Panchavadi, which is basically South India. Rama accosts Agathiayar at Dandaka forest and asks him,

> "O Vedic scholar, I am resolved
> To break the power of the arrogant demons
> And put an end quickly to their joy
> Isn't it better to move towards them? (Sundaram, 1992, Book 4, verse 2684)

For which Agasthiar replied,

> "Son, there is a hill with mountains around
> Tall trees and sand dunes,
> A cool grove with flowers and fruits
> And a circling river- called Panchavati" (Sundaram, 1992, Book 4, verse 2687)

In the next verse, he pointed to rich fertile farmlands there,

> "Tender banana plants yielding fruit
> Red rice stalks, flowers dripping honey" (Sundaram, 1991, Book 3, verse 2688)

Finally, he commanded Rama to go and stay there,

> "Go and stay there…." (Sundaram, 1991, Book 3, verse 2689).

This supports a scholar's hypothesis that it was Rama's dramatic endeavor to infringe on South India. It is important at this point what Iyengar (2001) noted in his *History of the Tamils*. In the subtitle of chapter XVII, *The Old Tamil Ways Still Going Strong,* he mentions that,

> "Notwithstanding the existence in their midst of Brahmanas and the attempts of Agattiyanar and Tolkappiyanar to import Aryan culture into the Tamil country, the bulk of the people continued to live as if Aryan culture did not exist" (p. 253).

Therefore, it shows that, with the assistance and advice of Agathiyar, Rama went to Panchavati with colonizing purposes. Understandably, Ravana, using defense mechanisms, had to have a strategy to thwart the efforts of his enemy. This reflects what Lavenda and Schultz (2007) call "political ecology," a branch of "ecological anthropology in which human groups struggle with one another for control of material resources" (p. 114). It also supports Marx's theory that every human action reflects a material want. A want can be explained in terms of quantity, in that, when a man's/ woman's want exceeds his/her necessities, then it becomes greed. Hence, it is revelatory that controlling economic resources renders immense power, and, for many, it is not just an implicit justification, but an explicit course of action. Thus, the fertile land of the Godhavari basin, in which Panchavati is situated, became a battleground.

The above mentioned Tolkappiyanar who "imported" the Aryan culture, wrote a book called *Tholkappiyam* in which he refers to a strategy of war called *vetchi*. According to that strategy, soldiers enter an enemy's territory and smuggle his cattle to participate in a war with him (Dakshinamoorthy, 2005, p. 36). Ravana, using the strategy of *vetchi,* could have stolen Rama's cattle, but Rama lived in a forest with no wealth or cattle. Therefore, Ravana abducted his wife. In addition to this, Ravana was probably cognizant of the *Manu Dharma* which lists the types of marriages recommended for the Aryans. Among various types of marriages, the one that involves captive-taking is "*Rakshasa Vivag"* in which an Aryan is allowed to abduct a Rakshasha woman to "keep" her and use her for any and all purposes. The definition of Rakshasha marriage is "the forcible abduction of a maiden from her home, while she cries out and weeps after (her kinsmen) have been slain or wounded and (their houses) broken open, is called Rakshasa rite" (Muller, 1886, p. 81). Pandian (1987) states:

> "Sir George Guerson's linguistic survey confirms Dr. Hoernle's famous theory that the Aryans driven forward by the change of climate in Central Asia entered India through high and difficult passes of Gilgit and Chitral and established themselves in the fertile plains between the Ganges and the Jamuna. They followed a route which made it impossible for their women to accompany them. They took to themselves wives from the dusky Dravidian aborigines" (p. 5).

Thus, bride-stealing was an accepted way of life for the Aryans, sanctioned by *The Laws of Manu*. Therefore, under the authority of their sacred books, the Aryans stole Dravidian women. Perhaps Ravana got a clue from this Aryan practice, and abducted Sita, justifying it as a vengeful act. Additionally, he had one more crucial motive for the abduction of Sita.

It was Agampana, a spy in Ravana's court, who suggests that Ravana should resort to abducting Sita instead of fighting. According to Rajagopalachari's (1989) translation of Valmiki's *Ramayana (*p. 147), Akampana, on witnessing Rama's fortitude while at war with Karan, the younger brother of Ravana, urged Karan to resort to an alternate scheme to morally deflate Rama, and the plan to abduct Sita was hatched.

Durkheim claims, "All kinship is social for it consists essentially in jural and moral relations, sanctioned by society" (Durkheim, E. 1898: 1: 306-19; Schneider, 1984, p. 100). According to him, the spousal relationship is a social tie, and it entails social, jural and moral commitments. When Sita was married to Rama, this social tie was established. The rituals of marriage are symbolic of the bond it carries with its accompanying moral duties. "*Tharai varthal*," the rite of handing over a daughter by pouring cool water, while simultaneously relinquishing the father's rights to her husband, symbolically reflects the concurrence of the husband to take care of her for the rest of her life. This ritual is described in *The Kamba Ramayanam*, in Bala Kandam, verse 1245.

Fire, one of the elements as a witness, reflects the crux of fidelity expected from both genders. "The hero recited all the mantras, pouring ghee into the fire and took the tender hand of the bride in his own big sturdy hand" (Sundaram, 1989, Book 1, Verse 1248). This rite recognizes the need for the holder of the sturdy hand to protect the girl with tender hands, while she should be faithful to him with the sternness of the fire. *Manu Dharma*, a moral code for the Aryans, has four life stages in which the second one is *grahastha* or householder. In this stage, the individual undertakes the obligations of family life. According to *Manu Dharma* IX 45, "The man is not man alone, but his wife and children too" (Radhakrishnan, 1979, p. 80). The only ruse that would strip the proud Aryan from his manhood is to steal his wife from him. This is the more important motive behind the abduction of Sita.

However, in the *Kamba Ramayanam*, Kambar, in the justness of depicting his villain as an embodiment of evil to befit the eastern epic tradition, portrays Ravana as being enamored by Sita's beauty just by hearing about her from his sister Surpanaka. Ravana never laid eyes upon her before accosting her at her hut minutes before he abducted her. Though Helen's renowned beauty also allured King Thesues who had never laid eyes upon her before, a parallel narrative to Ravana's love for Sita, in the absence of another motive of revenge for the mutilation of his sister, Ravana's yearning for Sita would have been more convincing. This diversion from truth is a classic exemplar of the narrative unreliability of the negative aspect of literature where actual

history is held bondage, and literature remains the one place where we can be free to see the truth of past events (Eagleton, 1998, p. 81).

In the literary process, realism is overlooked by the subjectivity of the author, and here it is the lust factor instead of the war strategy that the narrator favors, unrealistic as it may be. To steal a wife from a man right under his nose is a humiliation to his manhood, capable of deflecting his military prowess.

It is moot that a king is smitten by the evocative beauty of an enemy's wife, even before he lays eyes on her. Sundaram (1989) writes, "In dealing with Ravana's love for Sita, Kamban makes the utmost of the pathos and tragedy of unrequited love, ignoring the moral issue of adultery" (Book 1, Introduction ix). Sundaram (1989), unaware of the potential political perspective, conceived of the scenario as a mighty man's petty whim. By the same token, Kamban's subjectivity encounters contentious grounds as his reasoning demonstrates illusory concepts and deviates not only from reality, but also from the original version of Valmiki. In this analysis, we need to begin by contradicting the assumption that Ravana was in love with Sita. We have to gain a better understanding of the situations, comparing them to the original versions in order to come to a logical conclusion.

A variety of reasons can be enumerated for Ravana to have been angry with Rama that would supplant his falling in love with Sita, looking at the preceding events. The very reason given by Surpanaka to her brother, Ravana, for her mutilation by Rama and his brother Lakshmana is different in Kambar's version from that of Valmiki. In

Kambar's version, Surpanaka, after informing Ravana about their brother's death wrought by Rama, outright delves into the description of Sita's beauty, and explicates her intention of abducting Sita to be a wedded wife of Ravana. Applying the logic of psychoanalysis to these situations, Ravana is very far from falling in love with the enemy's wife, especially soon after he hears about his brother's death at the hands of the same enemy. In verse 3129, Surpanaka grievingly declares the death of her brother thus: "*sutramum tholainthathu aiya*" (all the relatives are dead (killed by Rama). "Beating her belly, she fell down and wailed, 'our kinsmen too were quickly finished'" (Sundaram, 1991, Book 3, verse 3129). Convincingly, it is not a romantic afflation, but a time for revenge for Ravana.

The death of his brother and kinsmen and the mutilation of his sister's body, clearly prove Rama's strength, thus disclosing a transparent threat to his power and honor. In addition to all these justifications, the original version of Valmiki throws in another crucial point, and has a different tale to tell. Surpanaka tells Ravana why he needs to take some action immediately: "*rsinam abhayam dattam krta/ksemas ca Dandakah, dharsitam ca Janasthanam Ramen a/klista/karmana*" (Pollak, 2006, Aaranya Kandam, Lines 31: 14-15). In other words, the Dandaka forest is in Rama's custody now. Kambar conveniently ignores this vital point as an initiation of war, just to sprinkle a few didactic statements of "do not covet another man's wife." Therefore, it was not an unrequited love with which Ravana was burning, as per Kambar's version.

Even presuming he was enamored of Sita's beauty, how would he treat her, the object of his intense love, when he grasps her and she is under his custody? The very abduction scene in Kambar is divergent from the one given by Valmiki. While he abducts her, "With his left hand he seized lotus-eyed Sita by her hair and with his right hand by her thighs" *Vamena Sitam padm aksim murdhajesu karena sah urvos tu dakshinen aiva parijagraha panina* (Pollock, 2006, Aaranya Kandam, 47: 17-18). At least, Kambar did not let his heroine be violated even with his touch, and Ravana lifted the whole hut along with her. He took her to his domain, but what did he wait for? Considering that Ravana has been pictured as a demon, he refrained from even touching her in her year-long stay at Asokavanam, and did not sever her nose, ear, or breast as a vendetta to what happened to his sister. We are led to wonder what kind of antagonist he is. Therefore, it was neither pathos nor tragedy, since, apparently, unrequited love does not conform to logic.

But why did Ravana resort to a sly stratagem of stealing a woman? The plausible interpretation is that it was a counter-action for Rama's pattern of military jig. Rama in the forest, so far away from home, and with nothing to fight with, employed the "divide and rule" ploy, the Roman imperial motto, "*Divide et impera*" policy, to cause consternation among the Dravidian brothers and enlist the younger brothers as his allies. The so-called "monkeys" in the *Ramayan* were the chieftains of small Adhi Dravidian kingdoms, as Kuzhandai mentions in his introduction to his epic, *Ravana Kaviyam*, an epic written in retaliation for *The Kamba Ramayanam* of Kambar. It is the

same “divide and rule” strategy that Rama employed in separating the younger, less powerful brothers like Sukrivan, a monkey chieftain, and Vibeeshanan, a brother of Ravana himself. Ultimately, it was the younger brother of Ravana, Vibheeshana, who divulged all of the political strategies of Ravana to Rama, paving the way for the victory of Rama. With his own kinsmen and tribesmen as insurrectionists, Ravana‘s strategy in taking a divergent recourse became obvious, and, hence, he resorted to bride-stealing.

While the capture of Sita is transparently abduction, the nature of Helen’s capture is still controversial even today after thousands of years. To expunge her of the supposedly perfidious act of deserting her marriage chamber, a careful analysis of her life and her two husbands is required. Having been a rape victim at the tender age of twelve, while her sister Clytemnestra has married Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, she marries Menelaus, the younger brother and the prince of Mycenae. Upon this marriage, Menelaus became the king of Sparta, thus trying to prove his worth to his elder brother and to society as a whole. The sibling rivalry theory of Freud might be considered as the cornerstone of Menelaus’ action in marrying Helen, but Alexander’s (2009) statement in her book *The War that Killed Achilles* sounds more germane and reveals descent theory as another peculiarity of this heroic period of Greece. She specifies, “Among men, a central tenet of the heroic code is that the younger generation is inferior to the elder, or to the generation of its fathers” (p. 27). In the same vein, we see the younger brothers occupying relatively less significant positions in the social organization as opposed to the magnitude of the value placed on the elder brothers.

Similarly Rama, the eldest of the four brothers was designated to inherit his father's kingdom, and the father sent the younger stepbrother Bharatha to his grandfather's palace to preclude any potential contention on the coronation day. The divine-like stepbrother Bharatha, who is usually seen as acting with fraternal love, was not the originator of the contention; it was his mother's boon, which she has won on saving her husband's life that she exploited. Despite all of this, Rama became the hero of the epic and the younger brothers, in the absence of consequential rank in the kinship network, dissipated into the background. Lakshmanan, one of these other brothers, ended up being a mere guard to Rama and his wife Sita, roaming the forest with them, building huts and doing menial jobs for the exiled couple. Sathrukkan, the youngest brother, was totally blacked out of the epic, as he had no prominent role to play.

In a similar vein in *The Kamba Ramayanam*, we see the plight of Sukrivan, the younger brother of Vali, being falsely accused of stealing his brother's kingdom and driven to the forest, bereft of his wife Ruma who is taken by Vali. In a multifunctional unit of a kin-based society, the social construct of sibling activities is formulated on the structurally differentiated importance of birth order. Therefore, the younger brothers were not the focal figures in the family and were left to fend for themselves, and they solidify their power by marrying heiresses, as Menelaus did, or by abducting the wives of other men who had assets, as Paris did. It is particularly noteworthy here that Paris was the younger brother of Hector.

**The *Modus Operandi***

The *modus operandi* was distinctly divergent in both cases. With motives clear, we need to delve into the strategic analogous and disparate logic behind their actions. The commonality between Sita's and Helen's abductions seems to be that they had to be separated from their husbands. While Ravana employed magic and persuasion, Paris resorted to charm and wheedling as his strategy to reach this goal. It became easier for Paris to take Helen away from her husband with the divine assistance of Aphrodite. On the other hand, Ravana flaunted his wealth and power as a king to lure her. Helen's consenting abduction was much easier for Paris to handle than Sita's vehement remonstration of Ravana. In *The Iliad*, Paris, claiming Helen as a gift from Aphrodite in one of the contests in which he was the judge, set out to Sparta and stayed with Menelaus, enjoying his hospitality, and left with Helen and her riches when Menelaus sailed off to attend the obsequies of his grandfather Catreus.

Ravana's *modus operandi* was more complex. Ravana, as expert in magic as the Rakshas, coaxed his cousin into metamorphosing into a golden deer. When Sita pleads with Rama to get the deer for her, Rama goes after it, but, Rama's brother Lakshmana is still there to protect her as per Rama's command. When Rama killed the golden deer, Maricha, the cousin in the disguise of the deer, screamed in the voice of Rama. Lakshmana was forced to run along to help Rama at the insistence of Sita. Now Sita was alone, and it became an opportune moment to kidnap her. Thus, in both cases, the victims were physically isolated from their husbands.

**Aftermath of Abductions**

Helen, after the death of Paris, married his brother Diophonous and, after her return to Sparta, she is seen in Menelaus's palace making preparatory plans for the twin marriage of her daughter, "the breathtaking Hermione, " with Achilles's son, and with Menelaus's son Megapenthes, born to him by a slave with Alector's daughter from Sparta. She is her normal self, welcoming Telemachus, being hospitable to him. Conversely, Sita's life whirled on a downhill path. Ravana's abduction of Sita created ripples in the otherwise peaceful life of a woman. In a society which regards a woman's honor more than her life, the repercussion is very harsh. Even after Sita became Rama's queen in Ayodhya, after the expiry of their exile time, Rama eventually sends her to the forest. His suspicious mind always suspects that Sita is not pure, and this compels him to desert her. Sita delivers her twin children in the hut of a sage in the forest. This is the fate of an abducted woman, who becomes a victim of disgrace. This is probably the reason why Janaka, the father of Sita, did not have a say when she was abandoned by her husband, or why Sita did not go to him when she had nowhere else to go. Though abducting the enemy's wife is one of the strategies of war, Ravana's action entails many consequences not very pleasant to a woman, and is severely admonished. Thus, the cultural divergence in the Aryan custom reveals its ugly side when Rama deserts his wife after she conceives twins. Rama, without her knowledge and consent, arranges a one-way trip to the jungle to the Rishi's hut when she most needs him as a pregnant mother. Among the tribal customs, it is not uncommon to disown the girl for no fault of hers if

she is suspected of being amoral. Ayres' (1974) hypothesis of "high valuation of virginity or purity (chastity)" contributed to the cause of abandonment after the abduction (p. 244). Additionally, the author of the epic could have imagined the coronation of Rama and Sita and their reunion after her abduction; otherwise, Rama was suspected of being powerless to have any progeny. A hero, in the eyes of the society, is a man replete with all powers, including the power of fatherhood.

**The Case against Misogyny**

From the analysis of all the dynamics of bride-stealing discussed above, it can be concluded that misogyny was not the crucial factor that played a vital part in each scenario. Both texts vouch for the fact that the status of these women is comparable, regardless of the wider context in which each culture is set. The father-daughter bond is sufficiently spelled out in both epics. This is true despite the fact that Sita's father, Janaka, and Helen's father, Tynareus were not their biological fathers, although both displayed exceptional love and caring for their daughters. Concerned about Helen' safety, "Tyndareus sent no suitors away, but would, on the other hand, accept none of the proffered gifts; fearing that his partiality for any one prince might set the others fighting" (Graves, 2002, p. 571).

Similarly, Janaka, befitting a princess's social standing, lavished money on her marriage with Rama, decorating the entire city with banana (*Thoranam*) plant, sandalwood paste and *akil* incense so that the city wore the look of the heavenly (*vaanathu*) Indran's coronation day. Kambar uses 60 lines to describe the diamonds and

other precious jewels that Sita wore from top to bottom. Kambar also narrates the whole spectrum of feeling of her father; including joy that his endearing daughter is going to be happily married, even though she is about to leave him to join her husband's family. When the bride Sita touches her father's feet, and sits near her father as custom demands, he looks at her with tears in his eyes.

These two fathers, Tyndareus and Janaka, can be easily compared to Chryses, the biological father of "wide-eyed" daughter Chryse, who offered "to ransom his daughter and the ransom he bore was boundless" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book I, Lines 14-15). The circumstances under which he shed tears stemmed from the deep love he had for his own abducted daughter. He prays to Apollo "to make the Danaans (Achaeans) pay for the tears I have shed" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book I, Line 49). "And he with much rejoicing embraced his dear child" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book I, Line 533) when she was reunited with him. These loving fathers bear resemblance to King Alcinious of *The Odyssey.* The kinship between a father and a daughter unravels in her father's immediate perception of his beloved daughter's unspoken "young warm hopes" of marriage and her infatuation with Odysseus. He "saw through it all" (*Norton Anthology,* 2009, *The Odyssey*, Book VI, p. 75). Therefore, misogyny is not involved here.

Correspondingly, nothing much is shown by way of mother-daughter relationships, a total maternal absence which is a reflection of patriarchal persistence. Yet the Homeric epics along with *The Kamba Ramayanam* stand unparalleled in the

delineation of marital bliss. The hearth scene in *The Odyssey* that attests to harmonious love, a vital requisite for an ideal married couple, is painted with accuracy and fullness of emotional expressions by Odysseus and Penelope. Analogously, the sagacious Arete and the benevolent king Alcinious signify unfeigned conjugal love. In the same vein, in *The Kamba Ramayanam*, Sita persistently reiterates that she would follow Rama when he is about to go into exile to the forest. When he refuses, she poses a potent question. "Eendu nin pirivilum sudumo perungaadu?" (Sundaram, 1991, Book 3, verse 1827). "Can a forest burn me more than your separation?" He realizes her predicament, and wonders what he should do, as he is aware that she cannot withstand the harsh conditions of dwelling in the forest. Before he decides, she dons the dress worn by the forest sages, goes behind Rama and holds his "palm-tree like long hand." This bears resemblance to Odysseus' perseverance in reuniting with his wife. The burning of the pangs of love during the separation is more unendurable than the blazing forest fire. The separation is as gruesome as death. The great love Odysseus had for Penelope in sacrificing immortality and mythic riches is comparable to Sita's devotion to her husband in renouncing the luxurious life of a palace to go to the forest. Hector's concern for the impending fate of his wife is denotative of the tremendous love he had for her. The essence of these textual manifestations carries unavoidable attestations to the decisive mutual love between the marital couples, with no room for misogyny.

Women of ancient Greece do not seem to have been abused, with the biggest difference being in the cultural outlook on abducted women, who may have lost their

purity as is the case in eastern tradition. Though Helen was raped as a young girl, she was still in demand. We see Helen in Troy with her second husband's family in *The Iliad*, and with her first husband in *The Odyssey*. In both epics we see her being respectfully treated by all of her family members. Her father-in-law, Priam, did not blame her at all, like all of the other elders of Priam's people (Panthous, Thymoetes, Clytius, Lampus and Hicetaon) who opined that Helen should go home. Priam surmises that "The gods alone are to blame for hurling upon me this tearful war" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Line 183), exonerating Helen of any blame. And beautiful Helen addresses him as "My own dear father-in law." Helen's choice of either staying in an unwanted, stale marriage with Menelaus or running away with Paris validates for her a constitutive act of feminism.

By the same token, Sita, the cynosure of chastity who consented to walk through the fire to prove her innocence, declined the proposition of a reunion when Rama finds her in the forest. Sita questioned, "Can a forest burn me more than our separation?" showed the essence of feminist response when she pleaded to mother earth to take her. She shines as a ferociously self-respecting woman in contrast to an ideational, meek, ever-submitting but loving wife.

Women of the ancient Greek world had freedom to choose their spouses. If misogyny was culturally present, women would not have had the choices that were apparently available to them. Gorgias (427 B.C.) in his *Encomium on Helen*, wrote: "Either by the wishes of Fortune and plans of the gods and decrees of Necessity she did

what she did, or abducted by force, or persuaded by speeches, or conquered by Love"(Gorgias, line 6). Though the stories or myths contribute her "abduction" to Aphrodite's aid, via a contest or kallistia (Καλλιστεία) between goddesses, it is probable that she had many reasons that contibuted to her elopement with Paris. Helen may have been aware of "all the treasures men [*sic*] say were contained in the rich and populous city of Troy," (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book IX, Lines 462-463). She may have heard of the "high vaulted and perfumed bedroom" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Line 422), or the ivory-decked reins that Trojans used for their horses. She was enamored of Hector's "playful brother," because of his beauty. Previously, she had been led into a politically arranged marriage with Menelaus, and despite the fact that she had children by Menelaus, she fell in love for the first time with Paris. As Gorgias (427 B.C.) claimed, running away with Paris could have been a "degree of necessity". Menelaus was known for his plundering and adding to his wealth (probably a reason why he had married her, as Helen brought great assets to the marriage). Menalaus, even in the midst of war, demanded ransom from Adrastus for sparing his life, echoing his lust for money. A greedy husband, a worshipper of money, even while the most beautiful woman is in proximity, could be seen as a good recipe for a failed marriage. Helen's relationship with Menelaus turned to disgust when she began to fall in love with Paris.

Graves (2002) offered another version of the story in that she not only fell in love with Paris, but also was a little self-serving: Helen "abandoned her daughter Hermione,

then nine years of age, but took away her son Pleisthenes, the greater part of the palace treasures, and gold to the value of three talents stolen from Apollo's temple; as well as five serving women, among whom the two former queens, Aethra the mother of Theseus, and Theisadie, Peiritthous's sister" (p. 577). However, we do not hear of her son's presence in Troy in the *The Iliad*. Unfortunately, we do not see her as being happy even after her second choice: Paris is another unworthy husband, an object of mockery because he lost a dual with Menalaus. She bewails to brave Hector, "I also wish I had been the wife of a better man" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book VI, Lines 388-389).

Helen seems to have a particular preference for brave men, as portrayed in *The Odyssey,* wherein Helen "explains how once Odysseus came in disguise to Troy (as he will do in Ithaca), but she recognized him and helped him kill many Trojans" (Powell, 2004, p. 121). Brann (2002) sees the situation clearly, as she mentions that Helen could recognize Telemachus, Odysseus's son. "As it happens she knows Odysseus well, probably intimately "(p. 163). Brann (2002) proceeds,

> "She herself later tells of an odd episode, yet another Odyssean mission, a spying sortie we hadn't heard of, when he came into Troy in the very realistic guise of a beggar battered with self-inflicted blows….The Trojans were fooled, but not Helen. He tried to evade her, but it ended up-she does not say how-by her bathing and oiling him and his telling her all the Greek plans, a very old version of a situation spymasters dread" (pp. 163-164).

As much admiration as she had for Odysseus, she had more for her "dear" brother- in- law, Hector. Her allure for exotic brave men had severe consequences when Aphrodite's evil designs made her follow Paris, the radiantly handsome man with erotic passions, and subsequently it frustrated her. The Freudian theory of unconscious desire that impels conscious action would seem to hold considerable effect on her elopement with Paris. Homer professed to his audience that it was an elopement by making Helen remind Paris after his fiasco with Menelaus, "And you are the one who used to brag about how much stronger you were than fierce Menelaus, stronger with your hands and better than he with your spear" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Lines 475-576). Hence, the combination of valor and beauty that she presumed Paris had, lured her to her infamy. The evil design of Aphrodite, according to Grave's (2002) story, "Tynareus, Helen's foster-father overlooked Aphrodite, who took her revenge by swearing to make all three of his daughters--Cyltemnestra, Timandra, and Helen--notorious for their adulteries," (p. 571) and, mythologically attested to her deceitful behavior. All of these variant tales illustrate that women had more choices and were free to have had more control over their lives in Greek society during Homeric times. Hence, there is little misogyny present there.

Regarding the remarriage of women, a reflection of women's freedom is portrayed by Alexander who examines the potent scene of Breisis who "all unwilling" went with the heralds of Agamemnon. As Minchin (2008) rightly observed, "Communication, however, can take place also in the absence of talk. We observe in

the Homeric epics, as in life, that sometimes non-verbal vocalization can take the place of words" (pp. 17-38). Echoing the same, Alexander (2009) continues, "While Breisis is still a silent cipher at this point, her reluctance is quietly suggestive of a tender relationship with her captor" (p. 25). It is a strikingly memorable scene that the abductee, instead of fleeing from the captor, displayed her reluctance to leave him. Homer is adept in presenting silent characters pregnant with untold sensitivities.

Another exemplar recalls the emotion-packed farewell bidding scene of Nausicaa, the only daughter of King Alcinious, to Odysseus before he left for Ithaca. Nausicaa, secretly stirred by Odysseus, hoped that she might marry him, but was disappointed that Odysseus opts to go back to his beloved wife Penelope instead of accepting the offer of marriage with her. With a few words imbued with silent emotion, she touches our heart by expressing her deep love for him.

In a strikingly similar emotion-packed scene, Breises, "a cipher at this point," a pawn in the hands of her captors with no right to any choices is most 'unwilling' to go. She had substantially solid reasons to be unwilling. Firstly, Achilles not only loved her, but expressed his love for her in so many words in front of all the heralds thus: "He has taken and kept the bride I adored" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book IX, Line 379). Therefore, Breises, bound by love, did not want to leave the man who killed her husband about which she makes mention: "The husband to whom my father and queenly mother gave me lying dead before our city, gashed with the mangling bronze," and "Achilles killed my husband and leveled King Mine's city" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book XIX, Lines 328-329 &

334-335). It was Patroclaus who comforted her with the promise that he would have great Achilles make her his lawful wife, and have him take her to Phthia in one of his ships and joyfully celebrate there with a wedding feast amid the Myrmidons. So, she had the secret hope of remarrying Achilles, an unparalleled hero who could give abundance of physical security in a war-torn country, and psychological security by way of treating her well and expressing his love for her openly regarding her as a wife and not a concubine. By leaving Achilles's quarters, she left behind her love, security and hope for a bright future, and one more crucial reason could be that few would want to be with an arrogant man like Agamemnon. By the same token, it is noteworthy that in *The Kamba Ramayanam*, Tharai married Sukrivan, her brother-in-law, as per her levirate custom, after Rama blotted her husband Vali. These potent minor scenes expose the status of women who had the choice of remarrying, a freedom they enjoyed, and it is not misogyny.

As a Spartan heiress, when Penelope married Odysseus, her father pleaded for her to stay with him in Sparta. Spartans had a matrilineal society. Penelope's father's anguish was explicit in his anxiety to get his daughter married off again in spite of Penelope's indefinite wait for her husband's return in *The Odyssey* (Book II, Lines 57-58). "So Icarius (Penelope's father) himself might see to his daughter's bridal, hand her to whom he likes, whoever meets his fancy." If Penelope, after a long wait of twenty years for her long-gone husband, was allowed to marry again, there is no trace of misogyny there. It is a depiction of women's freedom.

Pomeroy et al. (1999) accentuated on the fierce actions of Greeks who "loot and burn capture villages, slaughter the male survivors including infants, and rape and enslave the women and girls" (p. 61). On one hand, the status of women presumptively looked gloomy during war, while on the other hand, Pomeroy et al. (1999) themselves affirmed that "Within their communities, women are regarded with great respect by men" (p. 61). He believed that the Homeric epics do not display any misogyny or the hatred of women. By portraying powerful women such as Arete and Penelope, Homer himself believed that women suffered in the hands of enemies but not within the household. It was enmity, not misogyny that women suffered from.

**Bride-Stealing: Breisis and Ruma**

While the bride-stealing episodes involving Sita and Helen were the essential axles of pivotal conflict in *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam* respectively, the stories of the stolen brides, Breisis and Ruma, looming as constant backgrounds, resulted in cumulative developments in the epics as well. These subjective paradigms unveiled yet another dimension of bride-stealing in which women received marginalized treatment for the tactical ends of men at war. In *The Iliad*, Achilles called Breisis his wife, *Allohos*, instead of *παλλακίς, pallakis* concubine, but she was, nevertheless, a prisoner of war, booty from an enemy in time of war. She was again forcefully abducted from Achilles by Agamemnon. In the same manner, in *The Kamba Ramayanam*, Ruma, the wife of Sukrivan, gets stolen by her husband's brother, Vali.

The abduction of both of these minor characters determines the course of events of the epics leading to a culmination of warfare and other disastrous denouements. The theme of abduction of Breisis runs parallel, leading to the Wrath of Achilles in *The Iliad*, to the central theme of Helen's abduction in the *Trojan War*. Vali's stealing of Ruma, though minor thematically, gave shape to Rama's political strategy in procuring direly needed military help. The former led to the fall of an alliance in the case of Achilles and Agamemnon, whereas the latter built up a political alliance between Rama and Sukrivan. It, additionally, divulged the psychological insights of Rama and Sukriva who lost their wives.

Achilles resembled Rama in protecting his ὕβρις (excessive pride) and κλέος (glory) more than his lady-love. When Agamemnon threatens to take Breisis, Achilles vowed, "if you threaten to take my prize of honor, I will go back to Phythia, for I would much rather take all my beaked ships and go home than stay on here in disgrace to heap up wealth for you" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book I, Lines 189-195). Thus, the political alliance between Agamemnon and Achilles turned sour temporarily, and yet caused "unnumbered woes upon Achaeans" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book I, Line 3). Hence, it is clear that Achilles was more concerned about his honor than about Breisis. Pomeroy et al. (1999) explain this in their history of *Ancient Greece*.

> "Their purpose in acquiring and possessing many animals and precious objects (including women) was mainly to increase their fame and glory. Not to be honored when honor is due, or worse, to be dishonored

> Achilles by taking back the captive Breisis, a 'prize of honor' awarded to Achilles by the army, a great quarrel arose between them that led to disaster for all the Greeks" (1999, p. 61).

While Agamemnon's abduction of Breisis compelled the fall of a political alliance in *The Iliad,* the bride-stealing of Ruma by Vali, her brother-in-law, led to the political alliance of Rama and Sukrivan in mustering an army to defeat Ravana. It is Kavandhan who directed Rama and Lakshmana to go to the Rishyamukhi mountain where Sukrivan hides, fearing the wrath of his brother, Vali.

> "Seek out Sabari who to all beings,
> Is more tender than a mother, and guided by her
> Get to the hill of Rishyamukhi" (Sundaram, 1991, Book 3, verse 3696).

Earlier, Rama released Kavandhan from his demonic appearance, and hence, in his gratitude to help Rama in military matters, Kavandhan directed him to Sukriva. Despite the fact that Rama was desperately searching for Sukriva, Sundaram (1992) in his introduction to Book 4 wrote that there was no basis on which "we infer that in their opinion that Vali was a wicked creature and was unworthy of being wooed by Rama," but he clearly mentioned that if Rama approached Vali for help, it "diminishes his own greatness and glory" (p. 1). Hence, the poet depicted Hanuman, as the envoy of Sukriva, approaching Rama to lend a helping hand to Sukriva who had lost his wife to his brother, Vali. Thus, it is the poet's imagination that soars high in glorifying the deeds of Rama that resulted in the meeting of Rama and Sukriva, and the eventual killing of

Ravana by Rama with Sukrivan's army that consists of 9,000 crores "monkeys." However, the readers are aware of the truth that Rama came looking for the help of Sukriva. The circumstances involving the kinship norms and enmity between brothers, Vali and Sukriva, proved to be the largest step in the direction of war with Ravana in retrieving Sita.

Penetrating into details of the ethnicities of ancient India, we learn about the indigenous people who lived there prior to the colonization of the Dravidians and the Aryans, and it is these people who are depicted as "monkey tribes". Rama believed that "To kill a poisonous creature, Manu says, is not treachery" (Sundaram, 1992, Book 4, verse 5). As per Sukrivan's version, he did nothing to incite his brother. Due to his long absence, Sukrivan believed that Vali died in the cave, confronting his enemy, and hence took his kingdom. According to Vali, his action of depriving his brother of his wife was justified, as they did not have any custom of consecrating the matrimonial contract by invoking the Fire God, as the Aryans did. The situation helps us towards an understanding of the colonial hegemonic imposition of rules thrown by Rama into the face of the indigenous people, calling Vali's action adulterous. It is obvious that Rama is evaluating "otherness" with his own yardstick. Vali affirms that he does not have to abide by the laws of Manu which dictates terms to the Aryans. However, the "ideal" kinship between the Aryan brothers, in which the older brother gives up his kingdom to a younger brother, is contrasted with that of the "monkey tribe" in which the younger brother lends a helping hand to kill his own brother.

However, Rama's killing of Vali is a constant theme for debates on how virtuous or ethical it was on the part of Rama to kill Vali from a hiding place without being provoked. This accounts for the alliance-building strategy of Rama that had the distinct advantage of mustering an army with Sukrivan's help as well as his display of bitterness towards Vali who he equates with Ravana who stole his wife. With his mental agony on the loss of his dear wife, for which his manliness will ever be questioned, he compared the stealing of Ruma to the abduction of Sita. In this new setting, he sympathized with Sukriva for his loss of his wife, and evaluated Sukriva's anxiety, interpreting it according to Manu's Laws. In this way he struck two birds with one stone. Although he did not think of Vali as a wicked creature, he opted to join Sukriva whose alliance awarded him with the much-needed mustering of the army against Ravana, as well as fulfilling the task of killing a "poisonous creature" who took away his brother's wife.

Achilles resembled Rama in many ways: in moaning for the loss of a lady-love, in marginalizing women, and in behaving like a product of patriarchy. Achilles wept, withdrew from his comrades, and refrains from fighting. Rama's shame is on par with that of Achilles. Rama's condition is described thus by Kambar: "His mind darkened by shame and sorrow," and his "lips puckered, sighing heavily, shoulders swelling and drooping" (Sundaram, 1991, Book 3, verse 3548). Yet both of their actions do not synchronize with their feelings because of their propensity to marginalize women.

Though Achilles claimed Breisis as his lady-love, he readily slept with the pretty Diomeda, daughter of Phorbas, "one whom he had brought from Lesbos" (Rees, 2005,

*The Iliad,* Book IX, Line 770), when Breisis is gone. While this attitude of Achilles towards Breisis expresses his obsession for honor, it clearly indicates that he had a tendency to marginalize women. In the same vein, Rama abandoned his wife, and drove her to the forest when she was pregnant with their twins. This points to the fact that women in, *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam,* lived in a time of transformation when men from marginalized lands invaded the cultures which respected women. Thus, patriarchy, in which male supremacy was established, was introduced into both Greek and Indian cultures.

## Chapter 8: Pre-existing Misogyny or the Onset of Patriarchy?

### Patriarchy

This chapter examines whether the bride-stealing events we see in the epics are the result of pre-existing misogyny or of the onset of patriarchy, a social order which nomadic invaders imposed on a previously egalitarian way of life. It argues that ancient history indicates that women enjoyed tremendous freedom when matrilineal egalitarianism was in force. Anthropologically, it is suggested that in pre-industrial, simple agricultural and horticultural societies, women were considered the owners and inheritors of the land and were seen to be on a par with the land in their fecundity. Hence, there existed in such societies the worship of a pantheon of female goddesses reflecting their high status. In addition, the available literary evidence points to the fact that an egalitarian society existed before these invasions as men were mostly hunters and seafarers while women were farmers and fashioners of essential social events. Archaeology provides evidence of female figurines as proof of women goddesses, a mark of the elevated status of women. The aggrandized burials of higher status women show that they earned respect even after their deaths. This adds to the likelihood of the prevalence of a once-powerful matrilineal society across the temperate zone of the Old world. The incursions of nomadic, pastoralist, patrilineal societies intervened with the existing social order, and imposed their way of life onto the conquered. Women had not been the objects of abuse until such time as patriarchy was introduced by these nomadic people, bringing with them the stratagems of bride-stealing. Historical and

literary evidence attests to the immense change that the status of women endured due to the invasions of nomadic people. It suggests that women suffered marginalization after these wars of conquest. This indicates that the women of the epics lived in the times of transformation of social order due to war, and also attests that misogyny was not prevalent before the wars.

According to Ayres (1974), Tylor "believed that raiding preceded bride theft in the evolutionary sequence, and that, in the early stages of society, it played a part in bringing about the overthrow of matriarchal institutions" (p. 249). Ayres' scrutiny of E. B. Tylor's works seems to support the hypothesis that matriarchy or at least matrilineality existed in ancient times. It concurs with the existence of matriarchal institutions and their overthrow. Raiding and bride-stealing could not have occurred as frequently as they did in a society where women commanded immense respect. The tragic misfortunes of women do not seem to be coming from within the society. It looks more like an external force; patriarchy had then been enforced on them. In order to determine if it is this onset of patriarchy that is the cause of misogyny, we have to confirm whether or not matriarchy prevailed just before the wars. This section of the chapter examines if matriarchy did indeed exist in earlier matrilineal societies.

Scholars stand divided on the prevalence of matrilineal egalitarian society in ancient times. Ehrenberg (1989) writes that "A matriarchy would be defined as a society in which women not only have equality with men, but also have control, power and dominance." She continues: "Most scholars have seen that there are no societies

today where women are regularly in the prime positions of leadership, and consequently question whether matriarchy could have existed" (p. 63). However, it was Bachofen who, on studying the lives of the matrilineal, matrilocal Iroquois Indians suggested that matriarchy could have prevailed in many countries all over the world in ancient times. Ehrenberg affirms that "In the nineteenth century, the influential writers Bachofen, Morgan, and Engels put forward the theory" (1989, p. 14) of matriarchy. Fisher (1982) expresses Morgan's hypothesis thus: "In 1877, Lewis Henry Morgan postulated that primitive families [*sic*] began as matriarchies"… "To support his theory Morgan cited the Iroquois Indians of the American Northeast" (p. 135). Other proponents of matriarchal theory along with Bachofen (1861) and Morgan (1877) are the archaeologists Gimbutas (who does not use matriarchy frequently, preferring 'matristic') and Ruether (2005). However, Cynthia Eller (2000) expressed opposition to the idea of matriarchy in her book *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future.* She argues that the invented past of matriarchy denotes the failures of matriarchal abilities. She also believes that the myth of matriarchy only echoes the loss of the once-held immense power of women, and it undermines the innate abilities of women. Furthermore, Kottak (2006) confirms that matriarchy as well as matrilineality is an extant practice among the Nayars, one of the branches of the Dravidians of South India. South Indian Nayars have a matrilineal society in which extended families live in compounds called *tarawads* headed by a senior woman (p. 134). Therefore, this chapter highlights the holistic view supporting

the notion of the widespread presence of relatively egalitarian matrilineal society in ancient times before the onset of patriarchy, using evidence from multiple disciplines.

Ehrenberg (1989) claims that anthropologists "have looked at a range of traditional societies and found the status of women is regularly higher in forager groups than in any other type, but that these societies are far from a mirror image of patriarchy. Their social organization is based on equality between individuals and between the sexes" (p. 65). As many feminists contend, Ruether (2005) believes that matriarchy, which was not the opposite mirror image of patriarchy, prevailed in ancient times. Ruether (2005) avers that "A major authority for the new matriarchalism and Goddess quest of the 1980s and 1990s has been Marija Gimbutas, archaeologist and cultural historian of Neolithic Old Europe and author of *Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* (1989)" (p. 21). The peaceful realm of "matristic" is described by Gimbutas, (1991) thus: It was, "The Civilization that flourished in Old Europe between 6500 and 3500 B.C. and in Crete until 1450 B.C. enjoyed a long period of uninterrupted peaceful living which produced artisitic expressions of graceful beauty and refinement, demonstrating a higher quality of life than many androcratic, classed societies" (p. viii). As noted previously, Gimbutas (1991) refers to "Gylany," a term coined by Riane Eisler, which implies that the sexes are 'linked' rather than hierarchically 'ranked'" (p. 324). She further suggests that this peaceful time reigned from human beginnings well into the Neolithic agricultural revolution, not only in restricted regions of the Balkans and the northeastern Mediterranean but worldwide, and was also the original culture of all the

great civilizations of Asia. Asserting that such a culture was in place in Old Europe, Gimbutas (1989) states: "Without consideration of the very rich evidence from Old Europe, neither the Palaeolithic ideological structures nor those of early historic Greeks and other Europeans can be well understood" (p. 9).

Much evidence suggests that there were relatively few power struggles between genders prior to the dawn of patriarchy. There was a time when men did not see women as 'others', but recognized their pivotal role in the social milieu, and placed emphasis on the role of their actions in shaping of the cultural world. The same view has been expressed by Davis-Kimball and Behan who narrate the reign of King Idanthyrsos of the Scythians, the Indo-Iranian tribal nomadic pastoralists (C. 450 B.C.). According to Davis-Kimball and Behan (2002), "The historian Yulia Ustinova mentions that Tabiti was an incarnation of primordial fire and a symbol of authority, and her exalted position, along with the general dominance of female deities in the Scythian pantheon, has been interpreted by other scholars as evidence of the prominent role women may have played in an earlier matriarchal society" (P. 69). This brings to mind the power of Arete, the queen of the Phaeacians, who, along with king Alcinious, handled the judicial laws of the society and dissolved the disputes of the people of her community. The depiction of such a powerful character in *The Odyssey*, a Homeric epic, reflects the peaceful realm that both men and women once enjoyed together in Greece before the Trojan War. This strengthens Gimbutas' (1989) view that the culture which

she calls "*Old Europe"* was characterized by matristic society and worship of the goddess incarnating the creative principle as "Source and Giver of All" (p. 9).

The discovery and excavation of Catal Huyuk by British archaeologist, James Mellaart (1967), substantiates such an existence of egalitarian society hypothesis. Catal Huyuk is the major archaeological site often used as proof of a peaceful, matricentric goddess-worshipping culture in the Neolithic era of Old Europe, and it flourished in the central plain of Anatolia "between *c*. 6500 and 5700 B.C." (p. 53). To give credence to this, Papanek (1994) asserts, "Sir Arthur Evans' view of the continuity of the mythology of the Great Goddess, from the nuclear Near East to Minoan Crete, and from Minoan to classical times, seems to have been confirmed" (p. 50).

The Greeks, accentuating the primary roles that women play in the social system, called their major city *Metropolis*, μητέρα+ πολη (mother+ city) (**"**metropolitan area," Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010**).** By comparison, women seemed to have enjoyed better status in the earliest Mediterranean civilizations. Fine (1983) avers: "In the first half of the second millennium, Crete was by far the most civilized region in the Aegean area" (p. 5). The goddess worship of Cretans is detailed in the book *Ancient Greece* by Pomeroy et al (1999). They state: "The principle recipient of worship depicted in Minoan art is a goddess, pictured as a woman dressed in the Minoan style" (p. 32). Burns et al. (1984) mention that in Minoan culture, "women seem to have enjoyed equality with men." They continue: "Regardless of class there was no public activity from which they were debarred and no occupation which they could not enter…

Crete had female bullfighters and even pugilists. Women of the upper strata devoted much time to fashion and other leisurely activities" (p. 96). Ruether (2005) expounds: "Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, has been called the 'Cradle of Civilization.' This Sumerian society saw women as able workers and administrators. Female members of the aristocracy were appointed to administer large estates belonging to the extended family" (pp. 41-42).

Archaeology has it that women held a better position once, and the archaeological evidence of mother- goddess figurines stand as an undeniable telltale sign of women's power and prominence. Ruether (2005) opines, "The existence of the ancient female figurines was "proof" that women had been respected and had wielded power in these ancient matriarchal, or at least pre-patriarchal, societies "(Intro p. 3). The wide distribution of mother-goddess figurines has "been found from Pyrenees in the west as far as the river Don in Russia" (Ehrenberg, 1989, p. 67). Wheeler (1968), an archaeologist of the Indus Valley Civilization, avers that, in the Harappan culture, "the terracotta female figurines were found as manifestation of Great Mother goddess familiar in the religions of Western Asia and parts of Europe" (p. 91).

Religion, as many feminists believe, plays a pivotal part in determining the status of women. Studies reveal that, among peoples who have an anthropomorphic religion in which goddesses hold an equal status along with gods, the process of symbolic formulation becomes the connecting element between the worship of the goddesses and the status of women. To support the former existence of women's elevated status,

Campbell (1991) highlights in the ancient Mesopotamian mother-goddess cult. He expounds that

> "The earliest known compounds in the history of civilization arose in Asia-Minor area c. 4000 B.C., and by their form they suggested a reference to the female genitalia; specifically, the matrix of the cosmic mother-goddess. When the pastoral-agrarian village culture complex was a part of a spread south to the newly entered Mesopotamian midlands, c. 4000-3500 B.C., the cattle cult went along. It also crossed Iran to India, where it appeared in the complex of the Indus Valley Civilization, c. 2500 B.C., just about the time of the rise in Crete of Early Minoan II" (p. 64).

This indicates that the Indus Valley civilization had a mother-goddess cult.

Feminists argue that moon Goddess worship reiterates the existence of matriarchal society in ancient times. Graves (2002) highlights the prevalence of goddess worship in the Old Stone Age in the foreword of his book*, The White Goddess*. He writes thus:

> "My thesis is that the language of poetic myth anciently current in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe was a magical language bound up with the popular religious ceremonies in honour of the Moon Goddess, or Muse, some of them dating from the Old Stone Age, and that this remains the language of true poetry-'true' in the nostalgic modern sense

> of 'the unprovable original, not a synthetic substitute" (p. vi of the Foreword).

Similarly, the moon goddess was the focus of Frazer's (1890) poetry, the *Golden Bough* that celebrates Celtic cultural heritage and religion.

We see a multitude of goddesses both in Greek mythology and literature. The cult of the love goddess, Aphrodite, was a dominant religion among the Greeks just before Homer's time. The goddess of childbearing was Elieithyia who induced labor for women. Enyo was the goddess of war, a counterpart of Ares. The mother of Aphrodite was "gracious Goddess Dione." Golden-haired Demeter was a goddess of fertility. Iris was the goddess who came in the likeness of Helen's sister-in-law in *The Iliad* (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book III, Line 137). "Graceful Hebe", a goddess of youth and the Olympian wine steward, is also mentioned in *The Iliad* (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book IV, Line 2). Charis, the wife of Hepheastus, was a goddess as well. The goddess Themis was in charge of divine assemblies. Athena was the patron goddess of Achaean victory. While the goddess Artemis was the goddess of chastity, Irnina and Ereshkigal were goddesses of the netherworld. As literature is rooted in reality, the presence of these goddesses in the classics could not have been the mere products of authors' fancy. The temple of Athena, the Parthenon, stands even today as a legacy of female goddess worship in ancient Greece.

The importance given to female goddesses, along with the temples built for them, denotes the fact that these goddesses' worship was prevalent in the ancient

Aegean world at one point in time, proving the relatively high status of women. We find mentions of temples erected in honor of the goddesses as in *The Iliad* and in ancient Greek history and literature. Golden-haired Demeter, goddess of fertility, who separates grain from chaff, had a temple in "flowery Pyrasus" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book II, Line 790). A center of worship of Artemis was in Delos.

Near Eastern literature runs rife with goddesses. Sargon, the foundling Akkadian king, rose to power by winning the favor of the goddess Ishtar. Gilgamesh's mother is a goddess, Nishun. Shiduri is another goddess who lives beyond the ocean, and she is mentioned in *The Epic of Gilgamesh.* Though Mami is the goddess of birth who created the first human being, the official birth goddess is Aruru. Along with these goddesses in Near Eastern literature, we see the mother-goddess mentioned in *Tain*, an Irish saga which roves that the Irish had female goddesses, usually in triads.

Milton, a staunch Christian, intriguingly refers to goddess thus:

> "With these in troop came Astoreth, whom the Phoenicians called Astarte, queen of heav'n, with crested horns: To whose bright image nightly by the moon Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs, in Sion also not sung, where stood her temple on th' offensive mountain, built by that uxorious king, whose heart though large, beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell to idols foul" (Milton, 1975, Book 1, Lines 437-446).

This bears evidence to the Phoenician pantheon with goddesses included.

The presence of priestesses is attributed to the mother-goddess concept of ancient times. When Hecuba, along with the noble women, went to the temple of Athena at the insistence of Hector, there was a priestess those whom they called Theano, the daughter of Cisseus and wife of Antenor. "For she was Athena's priestess, made such by will of the Trojans" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book VI, Lines 327-328).

Argonautica, the Greek epic, mentions priestess, "And there met him aged Iphias, priestess of Artemis guardian of the city, and kissed his right hand"; Jason meets the priestess before he leaves on his quest for Golden Fleece (Seaton, 1912, Book 4, Lines 310-311). A description is found in the same epic of King Hyllus going to visit King Nausithous, the father of King Alcinious of *The Odyssey*, in order to be purified by the priestess for the murder of his children (Seaton, 1912, Book 4, Lines 522-551). King Hyllus has been mentioned as an "Illyrian king" in the 20th century Albanian National Awakening writings in which he is recorded to have died in the year 1225 B.C. (Kentlaw, online source). This timeline agrees with the Trojan War, and hence, King Hyllus, King Alcinious, and the priestess must have been real personages.

Recently Crete offered archaeological evidence of this theory of priestesses:

> "Dynasty of Priestesses: Evidence of a powerful female bloodline emerges from the Iron Age necropolis of Orthi Petra at Eleutherna on Crete." It avers: "Two unprecedented discoveries since 2007 – three lavish jar burials that contained the remains of a dozen related female individuals and a monumental funerary building where a high priestess

> and her protégés, also all related, were laid to rest- are adding to our knowledge of Eleuthrna's women, and forcing the scholarly community to reevaluate their importance in the so-called 'Dark Ages' of Greece" (Bonn-Muller, 2010).

This evidence reveals the important status of ancient women, with respect to their religious roles.

Ehrenberg (1989) observed that "Bachofen made the assumption that female deities described in classical mythology referred to an historical epoch of matriarchy, or at least that there was a direct relationship between the two" (p. 64). The power of Helen is instrumental in making Menelaus a king, and it is explained by Ehrenberg. She compared Helen's unique position with Jocasta for inheriting the kingdoms as mentioned in p. 126.

As *The Iliad* portrays, the Trojans prayed to Athena, a goddess. It is Helenus, Hector's brother, who asked Hector to give sacrifice in the temple of Athena. "Hector, you go to the city and speak to our mother. Tell her to gather the noble women and go to the temple of bright-eyed Athena high on the fortified wall" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book VI, Lines 90-93). As per Hector's request, Hecuba, Hector's mother, "took the most flowing and richly embroidered of all and carried it with her, a gift for Athena" (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book IV, Lines 317- 320). This is the only time in *The Iliad* that any form of the rituals of the Trojans are mentioned, signifying that these pre-Greeks prayed

to goddesses. The pantheon, in which Zeus castrated his own father to succeed him, does not reflect the religion of the pre-Greeks.

Arete, one of the powerful characters of Homer in *The Odyssey,* is a cynosure of the Phaeacian culture, and displays the charismatic summary of a perfect woman from a matriarchal society. Her throbbing vibrant energy caught the eyes of even the gods and goddesses. While Athena emboldened Odysseus to address his anguish to Arete, she said, "Arete, she is called, and earns the name" (*Norton Anthology*, 2009, *The Odyssey*, Book VI, Line 63).

> "In the Homeric poems, *areté* is frequently associated with bravery, but more often, with effectiveness. The man or woman of *areté* is a person of the highest effectiveness; they use all their faculties: strength, bravery, wit, and deceptiveness, to achieve real results" ("Arete," Washington State University, 2009).

The notable traits of a matriarch is also the reason why Nausica advises Odysseus to go past her father and grasp her mother's knees, "If you want to see the day of your return, rejoicing soon, even if your home's world away" (*Norton Anthology*, 2009, *The Odyssey*, Book VI, Lines 340-344).

In the same way, the Indus Valley civilizations had powerful women both in history and in literature. Wadley (1991), an anthropologist, has observed the distinction between the Tamil women of south India and the Aryan women of North India. She quotes the Tamil proverb, stressing the importance given to women among the Tamils.

"Through woman is being, and through woman is downfall" (p. 153). It confirms that women still play a key role in the family among the Dravidians. She also notices that women in South India "are more valued and are more critical to their natal kin" (p. 161).

The same is evident from the powerful women characters of *The Kamba Ramayanam.* Mandodari, Ravana's wife was of noble birth. She was the daughter of *deva* carpenter Mayan. She had a luxurious room of her own.

5029

"கண்டனன், நளிர் திங்கள்
மாய நந்திய வான் முகத்து ஒரு தனி
மயன் மகள் உறை மாடம்" (Kambar, 2002, Sundara Kaandam, Verse. 5029)

Hanuman, as an ally of Rama, came to Sri Lanka in search of Sita, and found Mandodari in her palace. He was awe-struck at the splendor with which it was furnished. There was a magnificent ruby-studded lamp near her gorgeous bed. A few of her attendants fanned her, and some played a Veena, a musical instrument, for her. She had what Virginia Wolfe dreamed of, "a room of her own." The treatment she enjoyed in her husband's care is testimony to the status women enjoyed then in Ravana's reign. Contrastingly, Sita, Rama's wife, underwent unbearable ordeals in the hands of her husband. Sita, entering into the fire to prove her chastity and her abandonment during her pregnancy are exemplars of the same.

In *The Kamba Ramayanam*, Tara, Vali*'s* wife, is a powerful woman among the chieftains of Vali and Sukrivan, the rulers of Kishkindha. Vali who was at war with his brother Sukrivan, drove him into exile and grabbed his wife Ruma also. Rama, planning

to assist Sukriva for his vested interest of collecting an army to retrieve his wife Sita, advised Sukrivan to incite his brother to fight. Tara, sensing some danger, pleaded with Vali not to fight with his brother Sukrivan. Her premonition came true, and Vali was killed by Rama, and Sukriva took over the throne. As per the levirate system, Tara married Sukrivan. When Sukrivan failed to muster an army for Rama as promised, Lakshmana angrily approached the city, and it is Tara's timely political advice that saved the city as well as Sukrivan from the wrath of Lakshmana.

Ravana, the antagonist of the Tamil epic, *The Kamba Ramayanam*, is an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva. Ravana's rigid adherence to his religious tenets is the reason why Sita escaped unscathed, despite the fact she stayed in his custody for a whole year. It was his religion that stopped him from molesting her chastity. Therefore, a theoretical explanation of his religion is needed to claim that women were well respected even if one was an enemy's wife.

This emphasis on goddesses is part of a polytheistic religious focus. Polytheism as Bowie (2000) puts it, "is not fundamentally a question of numbers of deities or their distance from non-divine life. It is, rather a concern with the many and varied relationships between living things" (p. 127). The ancient Greek religion and the Indian religion are polytheistic religions which have many gods, not a single powerful God. Studies reveal that among peoples who have an anthropomorphic religion in which goddesses hold an equal status along with gods, the process of symbolic formulation becomes the connecting element between the worship of the goddesses and the status

of women. In other words, the belief system is a mirror image of the political reality of the societies, including the relative status of women.

Hawley et al. (1996) in his introduction to *The Goddess in India*, appears amazed at the ease with which Indian men worship women goddesses without any inhibitions. He professes, "There has been a determined assault on the very history of Western religion in an effort to discover at its origins of a Goddess who was widely worshipped before the champions of patriarchy suppressed her" (p. 1). He continues that the Abrahamic faith denounces the way of seeing the divine as feminine, and asserts that "great creativity will be required before Westerners can discover the Goddess again". (P.1). He also opines that the Hindu goddess does not need to be resuscitated as she proliferates in ever new forms of herself. Therefore, it is clear that goddess worship never ceased in India from ancient times until today, unlike it did in Greece and the Western world. Truly, it is not just the goddess who was worshipped in India, but *both* gods and goddesses are worshipped equally.

Androgyny is another topic that relates to the relative status of males and females. Androgyny "is the state of having the characteristics of both male and female. Androgyny, as the union of male and female, can represent totality, completeness, or perfection; hence in some mythical traditions, a primal mythic being (*i.e.,* a creator or first human) is androgynous and thereby expresses in his or her person a union of disparate features or opposites. This does not express a chaotic hybrid, but rather a

creative totality (the 'coincidence of opposites')" ("Androgyny," Encyclopedia Britannica of Religions, 2006, p. 55).

One snatch of song seems to provide clues for the functionalist value of the polytheist religion of India in *The Kamba Ramayanam.* "*umaikku oru bahathu oruvanum, ituvarkku oru thani kozhunthanum, malar mel kamai perunj selva kadavulum,*" meaning "Neither he whose half is Uma, nor the one husband to two wives, nor the rich God Vishnu on his lotus" (Sundaram, 1989, Book 1, verse 95). This quotation reveals that the needs of every individual subject are met with a smooth functioning of the society. Kambar seems to seek the help of astrology by invoking the planetary positions, especially the sun and moon that are the determinants of how many wives each one is destined to have. Lord Shiva had given half of his body to his wife, thus he has only a half wife. Lord Muruga has two wives, one out of an arranged marriage and the other out of a love marriage. Vishnu has one wife whom he keeps in his heart. Thus, the gods govern all the doings of the planets, causing everything to be predestined. According to ancient Indians, no single prescribed form of marriage was suitable for all men.

*The Kamba Ramayanam* mentions Sakthi, as Uma, the consort of Shiva, and it mentions Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu. "Without energy, Shiva, the lord of sleep is merely the form of the Void. He has no visible form…Only because he is united with Energy is the central lord of sleep a doer of actions. This is why the Goddess is worshipped as a *linga* surrounded by a *yoni "*(Danielou, 1985, p. 254). Hence, a woman

cannot be seen as the "other." Therefore, it is clear why Ravana, a devout saivite (a worshipper of Shiva), not only spared Sita from being raped, but respectfully kept her in a garden, protected by women attendants. These peaceful realms of ancient Greece and the reign of Ravana's clan came to tragic ends due to incursions of tribal people whom the historian Toynbee (1956) called "nomad patriarchs." This is important in determining whether or not patriarchy, the root cause of marginalization of women, was introduced by the incursions of nomadic people.

It is surprising that some proponents of patriarchy deny the once-powerful status of women despite the abundance of evidence from multiple disciplines. The historian Toynbee (1956) concluded that one of the major causes of the fall of sedentary civilizations was the incursion of pastoral nomads. Since these occasional "eruptions of the Nomad patriarch" (vol. 3, p. 14) have affected the lives and histories of the sedentary societies, they have "come to be regarded as the characteristic manifestation of Nomadism" (vol. 3, p. 396). This is diametrically opposite to some of the sedentary societies finding sacredness in all living things and their interconnections. He explicates: "The violence of his occasional aberrations is not the expression of a demonic will-power, but the effect of powerful external forces which the Nomad is obeying mechanically" (vol. 3, p. 15). Therefore, we can surmise that the sedentary civilizations portrayed in the epics underwent these brutal attacks, and women suffered due to the nomadic incursions of nomadic patriarchs. As Toynbee ( 1956) put it, "The Nomad's outbreak is as sudden as a cavalry charge, and shatters sedentary societies like the

bursting of some high explosive" (vol. 3, p. 18). The impacts of these outbreaks are the ones we see in the epics under study. These attacks of nomads affected the lives of women from sedentary societies, and these women suffered marginalization from the nomadic patriarchs.

**The Fall of Civilizations and the Incursions of Nomadic People**

The historian Toynbee's complex concept of an "external proletariat" elucidated the destruction of ancient cultures such as those of Minoan and Indus Valley. The historian Toynbee explicated the causes of the genesis and the fall of civilizations in *A study of History (1956)*. Costas (2006) remarks:

> "According to Tonybee, after the genesis of a civilization there may come the stage of growth, which depends on successful responses to various challenges a civilization faces. However, nearly always civilizations come across a challenge they cannot adequately deal with this failure to respond leads to the so-called 'breakdown' of a civilization. This breakdown results in a loss of social unity in the society as a whole. Now, the society is divided into a 'dominant minority' and a 'proletariat', namely social element which in some ways is 'in' but not 'of' any given society at any given stage of such society's history – as Toynbee points out, 'Proletarianism is a state of feeling rather than a matter of outward circumstance'. This proletariat is in turn divided into an internal proletariat, consisting of people living within the bounds of the broken

> down civilization, and an external proletariat, consisting of outer barbarians" [*sic*] (p. 3).

The "dominant minority" or the "internal proletariat" is unknown in the case of ancient Aegaean Civilization, but the "external proletariat" came as invasions of proto-Greeks. In the case of the Indus Valley civilization, the internal proletariat or the dominant minority is the Vali and Sukrivan kingdom which is described as the Monkey kingdom and the external proletariats are the Aryans. We see this proletariat theory in action from the times of the first empires of Mesopotamia. The historian Woolfe (2008) states that: "Peoples such as the Kassites and Amorites from neighboring regions were attracted by the wealth of Mesopotamia and the land, with its undefendable frontiers, was frequently attacked" (p. 24). In her concluding chapter, Gimbutas (1991) describes the successive invasions of the people she calls "Kurgans", the nomadic steppe pastoralists from South Russia. Unlike the inhabitants of Old Europe, the Kurgans had domesticated horses and used them for military forays against neighboring peoples. The Kurgans lacked the sophisticated agriculture, the artisan work, and the trade of the people of Old Europe, but they had developed an arsenal of weapons (p. 352). These are the same Indo-European or Aryan nomads who introduced patriarchy.

This continuing pattern is the one about which Toynbee writes in detail. He includes the destruction of the ancient Aegaean and Indus Valley cultures as a few of the cultures destroyed by the proletarians similarly, the Minoans, as Martin (1996) claims "had grown rich through complex agriculture and seaborne trade with the

peoples of the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt" (p. 17). The Minoans did not speak Greek, but developed a hieroglyphic script in about 1,700 B.C. Martin (1996) continues: "The groups of people who are collectively called Indo-Europeans migrated into prehistoric Europe over many centuries and radically changed the nature of society already in place there, of which indigenous inhabitants of Greece would have been a part" (p. 17). Woolfe writes that "The Minoan palaces and towns were destroyed in 1450, following their conquest by the Mycenaeans" (p. 51). It is worth of note that Agamemnon was a king of Mycenae. Similarly, Rama belonged to the Aryan tribal people who conquered the native Dravidians. These Aryans, also speakers of an Indo-European language, were "a warlike people who used horse-drawn chariots and archers in battle" (Woolfe, 2008, p. 42).

These people radically changed the nature of the society whenever they conquered, and caused devastation across Europe around 2,000 B.C. As mentioned before, according to Martin (1996) "The Greeks of the historical period are then seen as the descendants of this violent group of invaders" (p. 17). These war-like people introduced patriarchy associated with monotheistic powerful gods. Martin (1996) argues: "The name of the chief Indo-European divinity, a male god, survives in the similar sounds of *Zeus pater* and *Jupiter*, the names given to the chief god in Greek and Latin, respectively. This evidence leads to the conclusion that "Indo-European society was patriarchal, regarding the father not merely as a parent but as the authority figure

over the household" (p. 19). Martin (1996) also mentions that these Indo-European males are usually seen as warlike and competitive. He continues:

> "The indigenous population of prehistoric Europe had been generally egalitarian, peaceful, and matrifocal (centered on women as mothers). These earlier Europeans had worshipped female gods as their principle divinities, the argument further postulates, who were forcibly displaced by the male deities of the Indo-Europeans, such as Zeus for the Greeks. This transformation would have begun about 4,500 B.C., with different groups of Indo-Europeans moving into Europe over the following centuries, and culminated in the violent sack of many pre-Indo-European sites around 2,000 B.C. "(pp. 19-20).

These warlike people sacked societies and transformed them into patriarchal societies. The Trojans and the Dravidians were notable among their victims, and this is what we see in the epics, *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam.*

Graves considers myths, which are normally considered fable or fancy, to have historical implications. According to Graves (1957), the principal theme of the story of the Sumerian Goddess of Aruru is "a revolt against her matriarchal order, described as one of utter confusion, by the gods of the new patriarchal order" (p. 35). In a similar vein, according to Mehoke (1975), Zeus' castration of Cronus and his marriage to Hera imply patriarchal forms and the over-throw of matriarchal goddesses (p. 63). Graves (1981) deplores the fact that the Minoan language died due to attacks by these violent

people, and the Minoan myths lost their luster in the process. The Minoans' language was "tampered with in late Minoan times when invaders from Central Asia began to substitute patrilineal for matrilineal institutions and remodel or falsify the myths to justify social changes" (p. 69). Mehoke (1975) pens that Graves, the peace-weaver, deplores the induction of the patriarchal system as the cause of the onset of severe wars.

Ayres (1974) mentions in her conclusion that "raiding for wives represents an attempt on the part of males to overcome the maternal influence and assume roles of sexual and social dominance" (p. 246). Further, Tylor's (1889) interpretation of "bride theft or 'connubial capture' also contains a degree of psychological truth for it appears to represent the delayed and displaced acting out of early Oedipal conflicts in societies in which father's authority is firmly established" (Tylor, 1889, pp. 245-272; Ayres, 1974, p. 251). Ayres' (1974) quantitative data affirm that, in patrilocal communities, bride theft often occurs as it is linked with hypermasculinity ceremonies such as initiation rites (p. 246). She argues that sexual identity anxieties and conflicts motivate such behavior, due to the sleeping arrangement of a child with a polygynous mother. These psychodynamics of bride theft have affiliations with the events that the epics depict.

Achilles' mother, being a goddess, did not want to marry the mortal Peleus, king of the Myrmidons of Thessaly. She "resisted Peleus's advances by changing herself into various shapes. But, assisted by the wise centaur Chiron, Peleus finally captured her" ("Thetis," Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010). Achilles' mother was a victim of abduction.

His father placed a high value on exerting himself onto Thetis by subduing and marrying her. This hyperaggressive masculinity shown by his father could be the reason behind the crude behavior of Achilles. "According to one story, Peleus stymied Thetis's attempt to make Achilles immortal by appearing at the wrong moment, and she deserted him" ("Thetis," Encyclopædia Britannica, 2010). His father's absence can be attributed to "delinquent" behavior (Glueck and Glueck 1950; Miller 1959; Rhorer and Edmonson 1960; Ayres, 1974, p. 246).

Whiting (1989), using a measure developed by Phillip Slater, contends that, in societies in which adult males show assertive behavior, the children show high levels of sexual identity conflict (p. 243). In addition, Crane-Seeber and Crane (2010) bring in the fact that the patriarchal attitude prevalent in the society not only harms women, but also produces young boys with patriarchal attitudes, which, in turn may develop into criminal activities. Hence, this illustrates how hegemonic attitudes of people boomerang onto one's own society. As the invasion of plundering people disrupted the lives of sedentary people, the invaders exerted their way of life on the "conquered," resulting in many sociopolitical changes such as the introduction of patriarchy. Thus, the aggression seen in people from such societies is one of the primary causes of war. The impact of war, a corollary of patriarchy, is mirrored in the epics, where women, who suffered in times of war, lost their once-held status due to oppression by men enforcing male supremacy. True to the statement of Tylor's belief, epics supply evidence of the

evolutionary sequence in the early stages of a society in which bride-stealing played a part in bringing about the overthrow of matrilineal egalitarian institutions.

Feminists believe that patriarchal society engenders power imbalances, favoring men and oppressing women. Patrarchial sociopolitical structures were created by men to keep control. Therefore**,** inequality stems from patriarchy**.** Connell and Messerschmidt (1997) explain patriarchy thus: patriarchy "is a concept of hegemonic masculinity, the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of the patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (as cited in Crane-Seeber and Crane, 2010, p. 77). Therefore, patriarchy, according to some feminists, is the real cause of subjugating women.

In addition, the mention of class war by Crane-Seeber and Crane (2010) is very apt, as we see patriarchy in the more general nature of warfare in history. "Within Europe and the Western world, patriarchy was well established by the time that written records first appear in the fourth millennium B.C., in Egypt and the Near East" (Ehrenberg, 1989, p. 63). Throughout history, patriarchal societies have been indulging in class wars. Harding (1992) feels that "Much of patriarchal history has been a history of the patriarchy: its wars, its politics, a progressive journey toward professionalized, urbanized, bureaucratic capitalistic or socialistic states" (p. 82). According to Coole (1993), the dominant position of men and the subordination of women more generally emerged from Western political philosophy. She affirms many feminists' views that

Plato and Aristotle “already wrote within a cultural tradition of misogyny and a social context of women’s subjugation” (p. 4). She believes that looking back to the Greek civilization which in part gave birth to Western political thoughts might provide answers for the origin of hegemonic masculinity. This may be due to the fact that much comes from the tribal traditions of the Germanic conquerors of the Western Empire. Coole (1993) poses the question: “How and why did women’s oppression begin?” (p. 4). She also brings in the fact that “peoples speaking an early form of Greek began to infiltrate the Attic and Peloponnesian region,” and mentions worship of the Great Mother. But she does not hypothesize that the proto-Greeks could have brought in patriarchy and its corollary wars to defeat the Great Mother cult. As mentioned above, the historical implications of the Trojan War enhance the possibilities that those proto-Greeks could have exerted their ways of life onto the previous inhabitants of Greece.

Patriarchy, as a concept of hegemonic masculinity, is seen in both the *Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam*, where it manifests itself as the marginalization of women. By decoding and demystifying the connections between the texts with historical contexts and the status of women in the epics, the misogynic portrayals in the epics can be shown to be signs of the onset of patriarchy in the late Bronze Age in Greece, and during the time of the Aryan invasion in India. It is the tribal invasions of Greece and India in ancient times that were the contributing factors of the death of matriarchy which prevailed not only in those countries, but in much of the Old World. The widespread birth of patriarchy set in.

The human sufferings represented in *the Iliad* reflect a violent society that only recently emerged from a political revolution. Coole (1993) writes: "Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* tell of the Trojan War and its aftermath, ostensibly depicting something ….Of the social structures described more in the tenth and ninth centuries." She is surprised that despite the prevalence of femicide, necrophilia, women abduction and slavery in Homeric epics, the commentators see little misogyny in them. She adds: "Although most commentators find little trace of misogyny in Homer, some of the images that would later degrade women were already present" (p. 5). In the same vein, Pomeroy et al. (1999) write, "There is little trace in epic of the misogyny (From miso-gynia, "hatred of women") that often appears in later literature. In Homer, women are not reviled or treated contemptuously, and also appear to have more social freedom than those of later periods" (p. 61). Both of these authors note that the Homeric epics do not contain any misogynic elements, whereas both address the presence of it in later literature. This clearly exposes the fact that in the 9th and 10th centuries B.C., no misogynistic elements were present in society, but they later developed. The historical documents prove that matriarchal society prevailed in Greece, as it was on the island of Crete where the matriarchal Minoan civilization flourished. Though Burns et al. (1984) mention that "The Crete state is probably best described as a bureaucratic monarchy" (p. 95), they also add that it "was apparently matriarchal" (p. 97). The presence of misogynistic elements after Homeric times was then due to the onset of patriarchy which the invaders had brought along with them. The literature of later times then

mirrored the misogyny that came along with patriarchy. The Greek Tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides in which misogyny is pronounced and which were written in the 5th century B.C. are the classic examples of the fact that marginalization of women which had been introduced after the Trojan War. McLennan (1876) substantiates the same idea that "the lowering of the position of women in post-Homeric Age as evidence that the change in the popular feeling about kinship, which is proved to have taken place, took place in Post-Homeric times" (p. 267). Graves (2002) believes that women's power declines in male-dominated patriarchal societies.

If post-Homeric times testify to the changes that took place, pre-Homeric times need to be examined to determine whether or not these changes took place at the time of the onset of patriarchy. Homer's world sets the stage for this scrutiny. The ideal love between the royal couple of Phaeacia is an exemplar of the status that women held in Homeric times. The character of Arete in *The Odyssey* is another good example to prove that women had been treated well in Homeric times. But for the love of Penelope, Odysseus would never have wanted to be released by the magic spell of Calypso, who offered immortality. The magnificent scene of the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope vouches for the ideal love between the husband and wife in Homeric times. Brann (2002) describes the scene thus:

> "Homer leads us into the scene where Penelope and Odysseus, faithful wife and returning husband, sit face to face in private over their own hearth for the first time in twenty years. The manner and mode of their

> mutual acknowledgment remains unsaid, by them or by Homer, but it is nonetheless shown, for it is a remarkable fact (and one of the ultimate mysteries of human nature) that words spoken over many passages can converge to concreteness in an internal picture that carries conviction" (P. 10).

However, Penelope, unlike her cousins Helen and her sister, Clytemnestra, did not bring Odysseus into her father's home, but instead went to her husband's house. This demarcates the patrilocal custom of a bride living with her husband's family. Graves (1981), in his book, *The Greek Myths* (p. 384), narrates the story of the kinship between Penelope, Helen and Clytemnestra. They are the daughters of Tyndareus, who is, in turn, brother to Icarius, Penelope's father. Graves (1981) states that "Clytemnestra was a Spartan royal heiress, and the Spartans claim that their ancestor, Tyndareus, raised Agamemnon to the throne of Mycenae" (p. 384). On marrying Helen, Menelaus, the brother of Agamemnon, became the king of Sparta. However, Penelope did not take Odysseus to her royal home. This shows that times were already changing, due to the introduction of patriarchy by the invaders.

Similarly, Rama was an Aryan, and the Aryans introduced patriarchy to the Indus Valley Civilization. "The winning of a bride by a feat of archery was an Indo-European custom: in the Mahabharata, Arjuna wins Draupadi thus, and in the Ramayana, Rama bends Shiva's powerful bow and wins Sita," mentions Graves (1981, p. 476). Thus, Rama is an Indo-Aryan of Indo-European stock who represented patriarchy. The matriarchal

power we see in *The Kamba Ramayanam i*n the women rulers like Tataka and Surpanaka shows evidence that patriarchy was introduced in India by Rama's clan in the times of Ravana. Sita's treatment by Rama is a clear exemplar of the same which is diametrically opposite to the powers enjoyed by women in the regime of Ravana.

**Religion of the Nomads as an Underlying Reason**

Feminists believe that monotheistic religion is the underlying reason for misogyny. Eve is believed to be inferior because Jesus or Jupiter or pater Zeus is the savior. Price and Kearns, (2003) mention that "Zeus is the main divinity of the Greek pantheon, and the only major Greek god whose Indo-European origin is undisputed. His name is connected with Latin *Iu-p piter*. Rig veda *Dyaus pitar*, derived from the hypothetical root *dieu-,* 'day (as opposed to night)' (Lat.*dies*), '(clear) sky'; as the Rig Veda and Latin parallel suggest, his role as father, not in a theological or anthropological sense, but as having the power of a father in a patriarchal system, is Indo-European too. Thus in Homer, Zeus is both *Pater* 'father', and *anax*, 'king' or 'lord.' His cult is attested to in Bronze-Age Greece" (p. 580). Thus, the father image was introduced to quell the mother image that was prevalent before. Graves (1981) concurs:

> Oympianism, "had been formed as a religion of compromise between the pre-Hellenic matriarchal principle and the Hellenic patriarchal principle; the divine family consisting, at first, of six gods and six goddesses. An uneasy balance of power was kept until Athene was reborn from Zeus' head, and Dionysus, reborn from his thigh, took Hestia's seat at the

> Divine Council; thereafter male preponderance in any divine debate was assured – a situation reflected on earth – and the goddesses ancient prerogatives could now be successfully challenged" (p. 389).

Matrilineal inheritance was one of the axioms taken over from the pre-Hellenic religion. Aimon (Haimon) is an Old German word meaning "fatherland." Territorial obsession is reflected by the word "fatherland," which is mentioned 16 times in the 24 books of *The Iliad*, and six times in Book 15 alone. The pride of nationalism and the cultural spirit are all-pervasive in Homeric poems which have left a profound mark on Western culture that looks to Greece as the birthplace of civilization.

It was Tylor's view, according to Ayres (1974) that, in the early stages of society, raiding and bride-stealing played an important part in bringing about the overthrow of existing powerful matrilineal institutions. The literary data correlate with the fact that the misfortunes of women, including bride-stealing, were the result of the introduction of patriarchy by the nomadic invaders.

**Myths as Embedded Messages of Patriarchy**

The nomadic patriarchs, to sustain their victory over matriarchy, engraved their success not only in history, but also as myths in literature. Though mythological expressions are intriguing, they have implied meanings and embedded messages hidden in them. Decoding these myths clarified the hidden purpose of patriarchy. They recorded their successe in their epics and sagas. This was done to socialize future

generations in that worldview. At the same time, the nomadic societies created laws to inscribe patriarchal codes for posterity, and to sustain their political position.

It was in the late Bronze Age, before Homer's time, that the struggle between patriarchy and matrilineal societies reached its pinnacle in Greece. Homer's epics set the stage for scrutiny in order to evaluate the nature of the conflict between the two. Contextualization of Homeric myths lends the groundwork for true understanding of the situations and the psychological elements hidden within the mythological stories of the Greek pantheon when war was the crux of life. Mehoke (1975) carries through this idea by concurring with Graves (2002) who became transformed into a "peace-weaver" after his traumatic war experiences. For example, we could apply the psychological elements and or sadistic enjoyment of crude power, a Marxist concept, to the myth of *Leda and the Swan*. Though it is unimaginable for a swan to rape a woman, it is clear now that a powerful patriarchal system trying to topple the prominence of matriarchal order is implied. Graves (2002) opined that wars are the direct results of the sadistic powers of patriarchy. A simple curiosity over the ancient tales is the popular motive for the existence of literature. However, these tales also contain important cultural messages for women, the victims of the supremacy and the destructive powers of patriarchy.

Cultural myths are of two kinds; creation myths and historical myths. As Graves (1957) puts it, "The Greek myths, while fanciful, contain elements that are historical, or prehistorical" (p. 27). The motive underlying the creation myths is different in nature from that of underlying historical myths. The psychology of the unconscious finds its

ultimate expression in the creation myths which, according to some scholars, are a reflection of a group's psychic reality or worldview. Campbell (1991) concurs with the theory that "The reconciliation of mind to the condition of life is fundamental to all creation stories" (p. 50), and hence we cannot extract any historical truths from them. However, it is clear from a superficial analysis that the scuffles and petty bearing of the gods and goddesses in Homeric epics are mythically associated with the historical representation of Dorian and Achaean societies contending over the matrilineal system. They are meant to highlight the superpower of Zeus over Hera and other goddesses. The myth of *Leda and the Swan* is the classic exemplar of this kind. Thus, the Marxist concept of the natural instinct of a human being to be in control always over others for his own economic betterment finds some reflection here. This is why the preserved hidden knowledge and the base of truth encoded as myths need to be technically analyzed within culturally-specific contexts and scrutinized with historical contexts in mind.

Every notable change in the socioeconomic system tends to be restored by metamorphosis in the meaning of myth as well. Myth, according to Jung, is a clear conscious manifestation of the collective unconscious. In this case, the unconscious stream is the subversion of matriarchy in the mythical stories embedded in Homeric poems which reflect the patriarchy's disdain for matriarchy. Graves (1957, vol II) suggests that Homer's description of Olympians as "greedy, sly, quarrelsome, lecherous, cowardly," (p. 312), and their hatred for matriarchy which runs rife in the Homeric

myths are merely projections of an historical transformation of a cultural system. Since we have substantial evidence that the cultures in which women were highly respected existed previously, we can see the changes wrought by the Achaean society in subverting those cultures.

**Tiamet as Matriarchal Great Goddess**

Hodder and Meagher (2002) described the heroic action of Marduk as: "A rather late but very important heroic poem in Akkadian *Enuma Elish…* is probably better known today for its central heroic event, the Babylonian high god Marduk's killing of the Great Mother, Tiamat" (p. 38). Campbell (1991) has a different view which was the imperialistic mentality of the patriarchal nomads was explained. He affirmed, "These invasions bring in warrior gods, thunderbolt hurlers, like Zeus or Yaheveh: the sword and death instead of phallus and fertility" (p. 213). Campbell continued that "the characteristic of an imperialistic people is to try to have their own local god dubbed being big boy of the whole universe. No other deity counts. And the way to bring this about is by annihilating the god or goddess who was there before" (p. 213). He cited the defeat of Tiamat, the potent figure of Hellenistic times in the Mediterranean. Tiamat was promptly replaced by Marduk, the Babylonian god. Campbell describes the war between Marduk, the god of patriarchs, and Tiamet, the goddess of matriarchs. The young Marduk sends winds to her throat and belly that blow her to pieces. He dismembers her, reminding us of King Assurbanipal's dismembering of his enemies, and the cruel treatment that Hector's body received in the hands of Achilles. This cruel

treatment of a woman displayed in a gruesome manner is a reflection of the hegemonic behavior of imperialistic people, displaying their misogynistic attitude.

**Pandora as Matriarchal Great Goddess**

Hesiod's story of Pandora tells of how she, "the first woman brought innumerable evils upon men through her disobedient curiosity" (Rogers, 1973, p. 22). She is described as irresistible, but she had a shameless mind and a deceitful nature. According to Rogers (1973), the original tale ran very differently. Pandora, whose

> "name means 'all-giving', had given real gifts instead of evils, for she was the matriarchal Great Goddess. This was the all-powerful mother deity who, under various names, ruled over gods and men alike before the advent of patriarchy. At that time, she naturally had to yield to a male-dominated pantheon, and myths were perverted accordingly" (p. 23).

**The Myth of the Minotaur**

The destruction by Theseus of the Minotaur, a creature with the head of a bull on the body of a man, is clear sign of victory over matriarchy by patriarchy. Similarly, one of the Seven Labors of Hercules was to kill the Cretan bull, another intriguing story of the conquest of the Cretans by the Olympians. Culling out evidence of matriarchy from a government treatise, McLennan (1876) expounded that "The Cretans, according to Plutarch, spoke of Crete not as their fatherland but as their motherland" (not πατρις, but μητρις) (p. 295). Therefore, it is a clear message about the victory of patriarchy over the Cretan cattle cult.

**The Story of Europa**

Though Europa gave her name to a continent, she originated from Phoenicia, the daughter of Agenor, the Phoenician king of Tyre. She was made the princess of Crete by marriage, and she had three sons, Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Sarpedon, who were mentioned in *The Iliad*. While in Phoenicia, Europa was abducted by Zeus and brought to Crete. The myth is well explored by Michael Wintle (2004) in *Europa and the Bull, Europe and the European Studies: Visual Images as Historical Source Material.* He wrote: "In its original form, the Europa myth probably expressed the rivalry between Greece and Troy, between the opposite sides of the Aegean, and later between the Greeks and Persians, and by implication between Europe and Asia. It may also record an early invasion of Crete, or even a raid on Phoenicia by Hellenese from Crete," and he concured that abduction of the enemy's princesses was almost commonplace in international and intercontinental rivalry (p. 18). Wintle indicated that this was a deliberate attempt of patriarchal Hellenic people to topple the matriarchal Cretans.

**Messages in *The Iliad***

Myths are a constant reminder of the laws inscribed in literature, hidden as entertainment. The narration which would have been passed off simply as anecdotal, and recognized as camouflaging the historical trends and truths. The mythical element was brought to the forefront by Graves.

Proto-Greeks' culture was matriarchal, and they worshipped Aphrodite. Paphos is an isle in Cyprus, according to the *Norton Anthology* (2009, p. 365), an important city during the Minoan civilization and later a place of an important cult of Aphrodite. It is the subversion of that cult that is explicit in Demodocus' song about the illegal lovemaking of Ares and Aphrodite in *The Odyssey.* The challenging of the Aphrodite cult is the underlying current of the following scene in *The Iliad* when Aphrodite gets hurt by Diomede while protecting her son, Aeneas, from a Daanaan's spear.

> "He, meanwhile, had gone with the ruthless bronze
> In hot pursuit of Cyprian Aphrodite,
> Knowing that she was a cowardly goddess and not
> One of those like Athena, or Enyo, sacker of cities,
> Who turn the tide of mortal conflict"
> (Rees, 2005, *The Iliad,* Book V, Lines 365-369).

The in-fighting of all the other gods and goddesses may seem very trivial, but it renders a blatant challenge to the matriarchal system that would be suppressed with a vengeance. An example is the remark of the archer god, Apollo, goading Hermes, "How would you like to bed that golden Aphrodite?", and giant-killer's return cry to Apollo and Hermes, "How I'd love to bed that golden Aphrodite!" (*Norton Anthology,* 2009, *The Odyssey,* Book VIII, Lines 380 & 384). These outright humiliations are not directed only at Aphrodite, but also at the worshippers of her cult. It was meant to be an insult to women, in general.

In *The Iliad*, the ill treatment of Hera by Zeus is also analogous to this kind of behavior, loaded with messages of the period toward the demise of the matriarchal system.

**Messages in *The Kamba Ramayanam***

In Sanskrit, Zeus was known by the name Dyaus or Dyaus (Pita), meaning "Sky Father" (Price & Kearns, 2003, p. 580). However, when the Aryans named him God of gods, and Indra brought him to India, he was rejected totally, and he is no longer the overarching god of Indians. Their language, Sanskrit, suffered the same fate as their god Indra, and it died along with the god it came with. Tamils, being the products of a closed society, have continued to live much as their forbearers lived. As a result, Indra, the Aryan god, disappeared while Rama, the victor over the Aryans, became transformed into one of the reincarnations of Vishnu, the Tamil god of Mullai, the forest region of the Ancient Tamils. Rama's breaking of the *Shivadhanusu* (the bow of shiva) in *The Kamba Ramayanam* is a fragile attempt at annihilating the local god Shiva; instead, their god Indra, the figure of *Purusha* (male energy) disappeared. Boulanger (1993) observed that "Despite a strong Aryan influence, Hinduism as it is practiced by the people today is more Dravidian than Vedic" (p. 12).

"There is certainly consistent evidence of an association between violence supportive beliefs and values and the perpetration of violent behaviour, at both individual and community levels," opined Pease and Flood (2008). As culture is learned behavior, cultural expressions voice themselves in the actions of individuals. Zeus, the

younger son of the Olympians, killed his father, Cronus, and ascended to the throne. The previlence of a father complex, as what Freud emphasized as his Oedipal Complex, presented itself in the killing of fathers by power-driven sons. Patricide was a common activity among some ancient middle-eastern tribes, as we see in *Sohrab and Rustam* in *Shahnama,* the Iranian epic by Ferdowsi (10 A.D.). The tragic expression of patricide committed by Sohrab is akin to the story of Zeus and the Oedipus complex.

Ferdowsi's S*hahnama* means "name of the kings." After Turko-Afghan conquest of what is now northern India, names of the Islam kings mentioned in the Shahnama became common in this area. Shahs ruled this part of India in the Mogul period. Sher Shah Suri, Islam Shah Suri, Babar, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangajeeb are some of the names that could easily find themselves in *Shahnama*, had Ferdowsi lived during the time of the Moghal Empire.

During that time, wars of succession to the throne were common: Jahangir blinded his older son after thwarting his attempt to kill him. Shah Jahan, though he was the third son vying for the throne, rebelled against his father, and tried to poison him. He also attempted to steal the treasury to incapacitate his father although that was averted. Aurangazeeb imprisoned his father, Shah Jahan, and killed his brother Dara Shikoh, the legitimate heir. In this light, Malinowsky (1953) affirms, "We see thus the parricidal sons immediately after the act of murder engaged in laying down laws and religious taboos, instituting forms of social organization, in brief moulding cultural forms

which will be handed on far down the history of mankind" (p. 155). These "lawless" sons then instituted new laws, some of which allowed bride-stealing.

**Institution of Laws**

Lintott (1982) used the word "lawlessness" to describe the long period of upheaval in Greek history and asserted that the "Greek tradition about divinely inspired law-givers must have encouraged belief that before their intervention, life was intolerable" (p. 13). Hence laws emerged to correct the "lawlessness" of the society, including the restriction of female freedoms. Bride-stealing became one of the corollaries of "divinely inspired" law-givers.

It is noteworthy that the practice of documented laws began in male-dominated societies. Brownmiller (1975) stated that ancient Babylonian and Mosaic Law specified gender stratification. "Written law in its origin was a solemn compact among men of property, designed to protect their own male interests by a civilized exchange of goods or silver in place of force whenever possible" (p. 18). She concluded that written laws are the ultimate manifestations of hegemonic attitudes of men over the "other" with no mutual consensus. Justinian code, the Code of Hammurabi, and the Laws of Manu were all written by men, without the participation of women or with their concurrence, in an effort to subvert the once-powerful women. The Laws of Manu arbitrated the position of women (Muller, 1886):

> "In childhood, a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons: a woman must never be

> independent. She must not seek to separate herself from her father, husband, or sons…. She shall obey (her father) as long as he lives" (p. 195).

The words "subject" and "obey" were power-laden words used to coerce women under the authority of men, and society was structured to ensure gender inequality and male dominance throughout the whole lifespan of a woman. It is noteworthy that the Laws of Manu were intended for the Aryans to help enforce patriarchy. The legalized versions of these behavioral codes reflect the same motive, but are variable in their expression in maintaining a stratified social order. They testify to the endeavor of a male-oriented society to sustain their victory, representing the psychology of power. The nature of these male-oriented actions are sometimes overdrawn and misconstrued as universal patriarchal systems of political control by men from time immemorial; they are rather the specific effects of conquering patriarchal societies.

The constant hammerings of these myths is designed to generate the psychological extension of a system in which women's status is hierarchically lower. Ignoring the reality of the existence of matriarchal systems in ancient times is the ruse of the hegemonic attitude of patriarchal societies to expunge traces of the former existence of matrilineal societies, hence misogyny was now lawful.

The misogynistic practice of bride-stealing occurred in the epics during the conflict between the matrilineal and patriarchal systems. The Homeric epic *The Iliad* mirrors the gender wars of the late Bronze Age. *The Kamba Ramayanam* reflects the

misogynistic elements after the invasion of people from western Asia. Epic themes portrayed male patterns of behavior that denoted that the status of women was diminished. Women were slaughtered, raped, mutilated, derided, and abducted, and these misogynistic attitudes formed a politicized order which conflicted with the inherited patterns of matrilineal society. Practices of war were one of the causes of misogyny. Women suffered at the hands of their enemies in times of war, but enjoyed relative domestic bliss in times of peace before the wars. The comparison between the previous social order which prevailed before the wars, and the post war society, demonstrates that the violence meted out to women was eminently political and not social.

About literature mirroring realities of life, Glifford (1969) states that "Every age views literature through the prism of its own occupations" (p. 49). As he mentions, it is the classical authors who present new facets in a new situation to mirror the society. When the social ideals are rudely disturbed, they become pivotal themes in literature. The inevitable cruel realities of war disrupt the fundamental dynamic elements of social ideals such as kinship ties and marital bliss, and the epics dramatize this process.

The narrations of the abduction of women of those times are illustrations of the brandishings of the victories of paternal forms of social organization over maternal forms. Before the onset of paternal forms of social organization, there was an egalitarian social organization in which women were not treated as objects, but instead with reverence and respect. Even the Sabine women's reconciliation with their

abductors is in view of harmony among the families and the nations, and women are the proponents of peace and tranquility. As many experts opine, matrilineal societies had relatively few trajectories of war in their sociopolitical arsenal. When confronted with war, they suffered at the hands of patriarchal societies.

One of the functions of myths can be to "control" people with power-politics that are hidden within. For example, the pundit Javali lectured Rama, the hero of the epic *Ramayana* that "There is no after-world, nor any religious practice for obtaining that," and that "the injunctions about the worship of gods, sacrifice, gifts and penance have been laid down in Sastras (scriptures) by clever people, just to rule over (other) people" (Sen, pp. 174-5). In the same vein, histories about victorious people and epic tales about heroic deeds in oral history in written text have the same purpose, justifying rule over "others."

# Chapter 9: Conclusion

## Introduction

Women suffered in times of war, but enjoyed relative freedom and domestic bliss before the onset of wars. Demarcating territories for the purposes of agriculture in sedentary culture led to the emergence of war in the modern sense of the term. Hence, war is as old as Neolithic period, but developed to a much greater extent at the beginning of the Bronze Age when city-states first developed. And yet, in-depth study of the texts and contexts of the epics, *The Iliad* and *The Kamba Ramayanam* measures the timeline in which women started suffering at the hands of men. The bride-stealing events in the epics are misinterpreted as misogyny due to the war like activites in Greek history from Homeric times onward and Indian history from the Vedic period onward.

Ignoring pre-Homeric and pre-Aryan history by scholars attributed to the misunderstanding of the earlier history. The lack of available of documents through the medieval period was due to destruction of materials by the victors. The paucity of documented materials does not mean that history before these two prescribed times did not exist. Conquerors destroyed many of their enemy's technology, and stole much of the rest. However, archaeology as well as mythology lay bare much of the truth.

"Archaeology concerns itself with man in the past," (Deertz, 1967, p. 3). "Archaeologists are anthropologists who usually excavate the material remains of past cultures, and through the study of such evidence, attempt to re-create the history of man from his earliest past and to determine the nature of cultural systems at different times and places around the world" (p. 3). Therefore, archaeology, though it entails some speculation, sheds light on prehistoric people and helps to reconstruct their history. Therefore, to get a clearer picture of *The Iliad*, a focus not only on the Mycenaean Age, but also on the pre-Mycenaean Age (the Helladic, Cycladic and Minoan periods) would be warranted. The Minoan culture became assimilated into invasive cultures such as the Achaean culture (mentioned in *The Iliad)* which became transformed into the Mycenaean culture. The material culture of Troy, known from the mound of Hissarlik, not only addressed Mycenaean culture, but also brought out the distinction between the earlier Trojan culture and the later Mycenaean culture. Thomas (1982) avers,

> "There were close connections between the Mycenaean Greeks and Hittites since they were both of Indo-European stock, and thus, related by language as well as through certain institutions. The Hittite branch of Indo-Europeans moved into Anatolia at approximately the same time that their Greek kin were entering the mainland of Greece" (p. 52).

From this, it is understandable why different tribes collected together to sack Troy.

In the same vein, the Vedic period in Indian history was mistakenly highlighted as the origin of advanced culture on the Indian subcontinent until the richness of the archaeological yield of Indus Valley Civilization was spotted in Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Wolpert (1982) states that "the archeological remains at these sites also emphatically reversed the relative cultural status of India's Aryan conquerors and her pre-Aryan peoples" (p. 14). Hence, the scrutiny of pre-Aryan epoch may give a better understanding of the epics of India. The Dravidian culture became assimilated into the nomadic Aryan culture, and became *The Vedic Age.* Frawley et al. (1995) mentions that "Haughtily, the Aryans looked down on the conquered enemy, sneering at the snub-nosed features and dark skin of the native population" (p. 53). Though the racism did not start in India, it certainly resulted from the Aryan invasions, and the aggressiveness of the Aryans caused the onslaughts of the Dravidian culture and their relatively peaceful life.

The Adhi Dravidas of today were the first occupants of Indian continent, and they apparently arrived from Africa. Somerset and Shamess (2010) note that "The ancient gene marker 'M130' discovered in 14 people in Jothimanickam village outside Madurai proves that the first human migration out of Africa into India took place 70,000 years ago"(Madurai Messenger). Surprisingly, while conquerors, languages and religions have come and gone, the gene pool has remained largely constant. The Dravidians arrived from Sumeria, and the Aryans came to India much later. The classifications of

these ethnicities of India might throw light on the war depicted in *The Kamba Ramayanam.*

As Murray (2000) puts it, “Civilized and hunting and gathering people have a totally different life-style; they normally do not have much contact with each other, much less interbreed” (p. 9). The same could be said more generally about nomadic and sedentary peoples. Hence, India still stays as the Aryan North and the Dravidian South. Wadley (1991) highlights the status distinction between North Indian women and South Indian women whom she calls, “Tamil women.”

> “A variety of features distinguish north and south India. Some of those that are closely related to female status and conceptions of females are: the kin nucleus that Beck has demonstrated for south India based on the female surrounded by father, brother, husband, son would not hold for the north. … South Indian marriage processions include women, while this is rare in rural north India… Daughters are generally more welcome in the south, as judged by birth ceremonies and payments to midwives…. Females in the south receive better medical care than their northern counterparts…. In general, then, women in the south live longer, are more valued, and are more critical to their natal kin than are north Indian women” (p. 161).

This attests to the fact that south Indian culture as a closed society is different from that of north India. Ruminating over the pre-patriarchal society which prevailed before the incursions of nomads, Gimbutas (1989) writes:

> "In Old Europe the world of myth was not polarized into female and male as it was among the Indo-European and many other nomadic and pastoral people of the Steppes. Both principles were manifest side by side. The male divinity in the shape of the young man or a male animal appears to affirm and strengthen the forces of the creative and active female. Neither is subordinate to the other; by complimenting one another, their power is doubled" (p. 236).

The same situation prevailed in both Greece and India before the nomadic invasions. After the initial military conquest, assimilation became inevitable when the conquerors exerted their powers on the conquered. Consequently, the status of women became lowered after the assimilation, and continued to be transferred from one generation to other.

There are parallels in later episodes of invasions as well. "The Huns were a race of fierce barbarians [*sic*] who issued from the steppes of Central Asia and had in the fifth century A.D. spread in devastating hordes over some of the fairest of the Roman empire in the West and the Gupta empire in India" (Majumdar et al., 1970, p. 146). These fierce people who followed the Aryans reveled in crimes against women such as rape and so-called "dowry deaths," traces of which we see even today.

Literature, as a mirror of life, echoes the realities of human nature. Bride-stealing episodes both as realistic reflections of events and as myths run rife in literature. The nomadic invasions which spawned those events are registered in the epics, and bride-stealing as a common activity among the nomads is embedded in literature and mythical stories as part of that process.

Women had extensive freedom and enjoyed peaceful harmony and domestic bliss before these wars began, and bride-stealing in the epics does not reflect culturally-based misogyny. It suggests that women, unlike before, started to undergo marginalization due to the introduction of patriarchy by invaders. A Homeric verse will be appropriate to substantiate it. The following lines are uttered by Odysseus to Naussica In *The Odyssey.*

> "May the good Gods give you all your heart desires:
> Husband, and house, and lasting harmony too.
> No finer, greater gift in the world than that…
> When man and woman possess their home, two minds,
> Two hearts that work as one. Despair to their enemies.
> A joy to their friends. Their own best claim to glory" (*Norton Anthology*, 2009, *The Odyssey*, Book VI. Lines 200 -205).

**Postscript**

The re-emergence of the practice of bride-stealing in India was aired by International Media, an international directory of worldwide media and newspapers, in August of 2010. Not surprisingly, these bride-stealing events, about which we hear in many contemporary societies, continue to occur basically in male-dominant societies. Many non-secular governments or theocracies associated with male-dominated

religions and societies encourage discrimination against women. Polygamy and its repercussions are additional associated causes of bride-stealing. The dominant effort of patriarchy to topple kinship linkages through females or matrilineality continues to be an associated cause of female infanticide, and in turn, for a shortage of women and of bride-stealing in many comtemporary societies. Dowry, bride price and shortage of women are some of the circumstantial causes of bride-stealing today. This practice that originated from patriarchal invaders continues as rituals, reminding us of Levy-Bruhl's (1975) discussion *Primitive Mentality* of all his emphasis on the 'primitive' [*sic*] elements surviving and resurging in the psyche of civilized men (p. 142). It is not a myth of misogyny.

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